Death March

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Death March

- Volume 1 -

1-1. Cataclysm Begin Through Death March

Stars wander
Great numbers of them
Sometimes glimpsing a shooting star
When people see such fleeting moments, each recite a wish in their heart.

But isn't the sky divided by the falling meteorites?
Accompanied with thunderous roar, the mass falls upon the earth with overwhelming speed.

There might be people who enjoy seeing them on TV or a video site... but no one would want to see this downpour in close proximity.

Yes, right now hundreds of meteorites are falling down in front of my eyes.

Nay.

I shouldn't say it like it's other people's business. This disaster is unmistakeably caused by me.

Due to my thoughtless choice about 10 minutes ago, now meteorites gouge the earth.
Striking dozens of kilometers away, trampling down the [enemies] there.
From the corner of my viewpoint, the red dots on the radar are disappearing along with their lives.

And then, a while after most of the meteorites disappear into the earth the slightly delayed sounds reach with a bit of ground tremor.

Before the wave of dust crawling on the ground...

Suddenly, I'm struck with acute pain, like it's some sort of divine punishment

My head feels like it's splitting.

As if my body is being torn apart and scattered away.

Immediately after my consciousness parted from the pain, my body is swept away by the dust wave.

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Let's rewind the time a bit.

I'm working on holiday to meet a certain much-delayed project deadline. The so called smartphone and PC browser game from major company who dispatched outsourced subcontractor programmer to complete it.
Even black company doesn't normally commission one person for two project. However the junior programmer disappeared on the verge of release, leaving lots of bug and specification change! Deplorable!

Working in a place with high turnover rate, the only programmer around is the junior and me. Having no means to anticipate the situation, I'm forced to not only manage my own project, but also stuck with my junior's doomed project.

"Alright, completed all the classes, I/O and comment entries, the rest is auto documenter from source code, relation diagram and seriously squashing the bugs.

I let my neck loose for a bit.
Surveying my surrounding, the office is full house on holiday like always. My neighbour, an outsourced person responsible for debugging, is grumbling while working, but no one shift their focus. There is no room for that. The surrounding designers and planners work silently with hollow, dead fish-like eyes.

When I returned from getting some coffee, the monitor already finished displaying the output material needed for debugging.

Even so, with no documentary to work with I can't get fired up.

It can't be helped if the junior who was thrown into OJT right away to complains like he's dying. Among the 4 programmers who were present when the junior entered the company half a year ago, only I remain, I'm not even sure how many is it in the whole company.

"Sa... Suzuki-san, the client claim that difficulty of WW is too hard for beginner, what do we do?"

You almost said Satou damn you. We've been in the team for half a year, stop getting it wrong!

The overweight director and planner turn his head over here with his usual troubled face.
Moreover, even though such troublesome thing arise, he somehow looks happy. Why are there so many M's among developers?

WW is an abbreviation of the smartphone and PC browser game [War World]. It's an orthodox strategy game with a bit of social aspect in it.

"Didn't they say that the main target market won't play it if we lower the difficulty any more ?"

Yes, the current difficulty level was decided after great many meeting with the clients. Those time-wasters were really a waste eh. Miserable.

"Why don't we use the canceled bonus for the first timer, the show all enemy on map and the 3 time map annihilation bomb? And give the skilled guy who doesn't use it a rare title or such as a present for clear condition?

"Since there's no time, let's go with that~. I'm counting on you for the implementation Suzuki-san."
Mr. Overweight said it as carefree as ever.

"Waitaminute. I'm still debugging the smartphone MMORPG right now, just give the OK to the client for now. There's no time to fix it if it gets rejected due to poor implementation."
"OK. Will immediately tell them on the phone~"

The gigantic figure of Mr. Overweight disappear into the smoking area with phone in hand.

I continue to work while silently muttering to myself.
The GO sign on Mr. overweight's office lit up, he's out eating junk food on late night.

After correcting numerous superficial errors left behind by my junior, I leave the rest to the debug team.

That remind me, what was the name again? It didn't usually come out since I always call it MMO or Roleplay. Oh yeah, it's [Freedom Fantasy World]. Because it's easy to mix up with WW's former name, [Fantasy War World], no one called it with the proper name. When I think back on it, the documentary marked it as FFW. Since we removed the [Fantasy] from WW, nowadays it's not ambiguous though.

While the modification for WW goes on for a while, I'm sending the bug I discovered from FFW to the debug team... All-nighter again today huh.

The checking continues until the next morning, Miraculously the client program of the MMO-RPG is delivered.

Of course, probably there are still some bugs remaining, but since the super weapon called [Update Patch] exists for net distributed programs, there's no need to worry. I feel like I can hear booing from users but I'm sleepy. While the debug team is working, I forwarded the modified exe package of WW to Mr. overweight via intra-company mail, then I retreated to the safe haven under my desk to sleep for the first time in 30 hours.

Ah, bliss. The funtime of a corporate slave. For now, sleep is justice!

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Do you know what lucid dream is?

Being aware that you're inside your dream.

Right now, I'm in wilderness.

I'll stop since it looks like a line from Pol-san <TLN: I have no idea who>

Yep, wilderness. I guess it's okay to liken it with the American Grand Canyon.

Why do I know that it's a dream?

One, because I remember sleeping under my desk. Another is because I can see [Icon] for 4 on the lower right and [Menu] written on the upper-right of my vision.

It looks like the thing on WW I worked on earlier.

However! This is the first time that I'm dreaming about the thing I worked on during a debugging Death March. Though I'm not sure why it's wilderness instead of my work room...
Was it because the room was dry, I'm feeling that's the reason.

Somehow the menu opens when I tap it with my finger. A transparent window often used for near-future stuff appears in my vision... I have poor imagination if I say myself, I'll never be a planner or designer.

The menu is divided into tabs for [INFO], [MAP], [Unit Management], [Storage], [Exchange], and [Log], as well as [Status], [Equipment], [Magic] and [Skill] menus that don't exist in WW.

Did it get mixed up during the FFW debug last night?

Well, you can't really expect consistency in dream though.

When I check Status, level is 1, HP, MP, Strength and all other attribute are 10. This is the basic status that hasn't been assigned with bonus points. Come to think of it, the last check was character creation.

Hmm? There's also Job Type and Reward & Punishment parameters that

don't exist in FFW? Where did it get mixed in from?

Age, 15 years old... Did I want to have mentality of a student again?
[Job Type: Management], but I don't even have one subordinate!
Even so, [Affiliation: None], is it a sign that I want to change job...

The content truly has hidden meaning in it... Ah, I want a vacation.

The peculiar ability of [Unit Creation] or [Unit Arrangement] probably mixed in from WW, but is there any need for the peculiar ability field to be written in the menu?
Furthermore what is with the last ability being [Indestructible]? What a strange dream.

I'm wearing a Polo shirt, chinos pant and sneakers. Hey, this is my attire just now. In the storage, there is my wallet, mobile phone and a yellow box with impressive nutritional balance food inside, 1 box. Come to think of it, I left it on the desk with the intention of eating but I lost to the drowsiness in the end.

[Magic] and [Skill] are blank.
There are 10 skill points but sadly there are no skills to allocate them into.

Opening [Setting], I add map and radar on basic indicator. Map displays a wide area and my own position. Radar is almost the same as map but it searches for enemies on the area, and adds color-coding to enemies and neutral units.

I'm shown on radar as a small white point. The surrounding 100 meter is shown in gray, indicating unexplored region.

"Umu, I cannot see any enemies. It's free time. If only this was grassland I could indulge myself in lying around inactive."
I'm not interested in lying down on a rough ground.

I inadvertently stare at the icon "4" on the lower right corner. [All Map Exploration] is 1, [Meteor Shower] is 3. These are the measures for newbies from the arrangement with Mr. overweight.

[All Map Exploration] is just like the name suggests, search all the region in range. It also makes it possible to view detailed information, including the weak point of all units.
I thought that the scope of information was too much with no practical use for it, but Mr. overweight pushed for it to be included in the package.

I tried tapping it like on a smartphone.
The radar searched for all enemy and countless red dot appear. I lower magnification on the radar to display wider area.
Red dots filled half the map... Aren't the enemies too many?

I choose to keep them company with my own army using [Unit]
I'm getting fired up on having a small army defeating large one!

◇

...There was an era when I thought such thing.

[Unit Creation]... Possibility to make unit, none.
[Unit Arrangement]... Can't arrange nonexistent unit.

"Attacking with a level 1 character lololol"
Truly a dream. Even absurd things are unreasonable.

I glanced at the [Meteor Shower] icon on the lower right.

This is [Meteor Shower], the celestial annihilation.

[Meteor Shower] is set with high tension parameters; it could destroy everything, beside the campaign scenario last hidden boss, in a single blow.

It's a message for beginner that says "Bulldoze the map you can't clear with this".

Would you push?
>Yes

ＹＥＳ
Heil Braiking! <TLN: Thanks for the context!>

The last one seems to be a bit different.
Maybe the effects the from all-nighter still remain, I tap the icon while thinking such thing.

...The silence hurts.
I expected something amazing but there's nothing happening is it?

I was sad for a moment and proceed to lie down. My back hurt from the rough ground.
Then I turn my face toward the sky, something comes into the view...

Thank you for waiting.

We're finally back to the opening scene.

Real name, Suzuki Ichiro. Character name, Satou's life in different world begin this way.

1-2. Dreamer Write as Ephemeral Read

Hello, Suzuki here.

Having weak presence, I've been called Satou since my school days for some reason, this is Suzuki.

Even though you don't feel pain in a dream, you can still feel the signs of pain when you dream of dental caries.

No?

Well, that's good too.

<TLN: This is how a chapter begin whenever it feature Satou's perspective, it usually don't have anything to do with the actual plot at all. Just some random musing, so don't think too much of it>

◇

I seem to have fainted for two hours following the severe pain after the Meteor Shower receded.

Time is displayed on the menu. Convenient.

My body is half buried in the ground.

Huh? I can't get up...

Feels like when you can't get up off the bed during winter.

My hands seems to move but menu operation is troublesome since it feels heavy.

If only I had ESP to operate the menu and check the log.

When I imagined such thing, it really happened. Truly a dream. It's

unrestricted in strange places.

When I see the log while thinking that, the message [Satou Level Up] showed up and harassment-like [Chararacchara~] famous level up SFX rang when I scroll through the log.

Continuing for a while, I finally found a different message log.

> Skill [Summoning Magic: Foreign World] Acquired.

> Summoning Magic [Meteor Shower] Acquired.

<TLN:Whoops, was also skill earlier. Edited>

[Meteor Shower] is that meteorite summoning magic, right?

A magic that does not exist in FFW. Summoning magic is only supposed to summon spirits or golems. Though the world part bugs me. There is no [Foreign World] in either FFW or WW. It bothers me even for a dream.

The [Level Up] messages continue on.

Since there's a time stamp, the order of message can't be wrong. In order it's [Skill Acquired] [Magic that belongs to the Skill Acquired] [Level up]

In other words, this is the kind of RPG that does not let you automatically learn skill and magic as your level rise! <TLN: They work independently, you can learn skill or magic regardless of level when you meet the required condition>

"No no, why am I doing analysis inside my dream..."

Apparently my habit of analyzing thing from gamer era surfaced.

But it's alright, even if it's embarrassing inside a dream, let's continue the analysis.

Even in this situation, my real body is properly taking a rest anyway!

I close the log and decided to check the magic and skill tabs.

"But, before that."

I set the [Log] to open by default from [Setting].

It's troublesome to switch every time.

The magic are [Meteor Shower] and [All Map Exploration].

The skills are [Summoning Magic: Foreign World][Nature Magic: Foreign World].

Seems that [All Map Exploration] belongs to the nature magic category.

Are usable magic and skills registered?

But I can't use it if I don't remember it anyway, this time the exclusive use of initial bonus seems to be an irregular pattern. As a programmer I immediately deny the notion.

My status has changed considerably. After all, my level has been raised to 310 from 1. The limit in FFW should have been 50 at the time I went to sleep. Though we raised it to infinity when we ran stress tests for the server, so the memory from that time might've affected this dream.

Experience point is lined up to astronomical 9 digit number I don't feel like reading it. I want to have a comma splice for every three digits. Let's propose it for the next update.

Strength (STR) and Intelligence (INT) attribute values are 99. FFW client stopped the value at 99 but there is no actual upper limit. During the time when we lift off level restriction the attribute value also rises accordingly... In other word, the actual value might be higher here too?

Endurance (HP) and MP (Magic Power), and Stamina (SP) became 3100 harmoniously. These were set to rise by a fixed 10 for each level. There are many approaches to reduce consumption by various skills.

It's made this way since, according to the Planner, the adjustment is troublesome if we raise each one differently.

In addition, availale skill points are also 3100.

Did it decrease from the acquired skill earlier?

When I properly look at the skill column, both skills just now are greyed out. [Magic Art : Foreign World Lv0] shows up when I tap it. Tapping the Lv text shows [Please Allocate Point (1-10)] confirmation dialogue, so I tried to put 10.

Without any SFX the text becomes white and changes to [Magic Art: Foreign World Lv10]. Skill points become 3090. 1 level = 1 skill point. Easy to understand. When I try to tap on it again, [Maximum Level] message shows up.

On the magic column, [All Map Exploration] text is white while [Meteor Shower] remains in grey.

It seems that you can't meet the condition to use magic if you don't allocate points to the skill level. So I also put 10 point to [Summoning Magic: Foreign World Lv0].

There are also many things added to title column.

First [Monster Slayer]. Yep, I understand this. Then [Scale Tribe Slayer][Scale Tribe Calamity][Scale Tribe Natural Enemy] I'm not sure what scale tribe mean but they're probably reptile monsters. Furthermore, [Wyvern Slayer][Dragon Slayer[Lower]][Dragon Slayer[Infant]][Dragon Slayer[Adult]][Dragon Slayer[Ancient]], and other [Dragon Slayer] with [] inside continue endlessly.

Well, with this many dragons I can understand why such an impossible level-up to the 300 range happened. The map was dyed red before the attack earlier.

Then, just like the title for Scale Tribe, [Dragon Tribe Natural Enemy] appeared and the last title is [God Slayer].

Do you believe in god?

"Wait, when did I kill one?"

I tap the log and search for [God].

>Defeated the Dragon God AkonKagura!

There, the cause for god slayer. I see, the meteor shower also killed the god.

I see, I killed it...

Only 2 remain, god slaying technique!!

No no, why would I kill them?

However, the log doesn't show damage so I don't know how powerful it was. In FFW and WW, the last blows damage should have been displayed but... I guess there's no point questioning a dream.

Since it's become easier to move, I raise my body.

I turned off the display icon for [Meteor Shower] in [Setting] since I don't want to become the enemy of humanity by carelessly clicking it.

Oh right, I haven't used the the magic column yet.

I switched to the tab with [All Map Exploration] and [Meteor Shower] in it. Now then, how do I use it. I wonder if tapping it normally work.

There is no particular change when I try to use [All Map Exploration].

When I check the log there's [Magic: All Map Exploration used] message. MP become 3090 in the status. Seems like it uses 10 MP. I added HP and MP to the basic indicator since it's annoying to check it every time.

There's nothing reflected in the radar besides myself.

It's nice that there's no enemy but mass killing like this is not funny. No, wait, it's normal for a game.

Since there are no victims I guess it's okay? I slowly tap on [Meteor Shower]. It feels like something is greatly pulling out my vigor. I saw my MP continue to decrease. It stopped after consuming exactly 1000 points.

It didn't feel like this the first time I use it, guess it wasn't using my own magic power back then.

I look up at the sky. There's no meteorite yet. Considering before, it should be soon.

And then groups of meteorites tore apart the cloud.

Huge. What the heck is that.

It's 100 times bigger than the earlier meteorites.

I instinctively run before thinking.

Of course toward the opposite side of the drop zone.

I run as fast as I can with the continuous huge meteorite impact sound in the background.

As if running through water, the air resistance is too strong. It normally feels sluggish when you run in dream, is it just me?

I rolled over to the other side of a table-like small wall of rocks. Even though I said small, it's about 100 meter in radius so it will do fine as a shield.

A tsunami of dust sweeps apart just right after I went into the shelter. People-sized rock occasionally roll through the dust cloud, my spine becomes a bit cold.

I wonder how long it will elapse. When the dust cloud settled I climb the rock wall to see at the fall.

Since the slope is pretty steep I tried jumping over 50 cm height.

Pon. I fly 5 meter feeling like hearing such SFX.

Landing on the ledge of a rock with slight panic.

"This status rise, what a joke~"

I tried to deceive my trembling body by speaking to myself.

"That giant meteorite earlier is probably thanks to INT increase too~"

I run up the wall by alternatively kicking through various ledges and rock edges like some kind of ninja in games and manga. How convenient. Even in a dream, I have pretty high adaptability if I may say so myself.

I can see the collapse of a mushroom cloud in the distance. Most likely, it's sediment that got caught up on the fall. This would create crop failure and health damage disaster if this was the real world, due to reduction of sunshine.

"It's a dream anyway, there's no helping it even if I think about it."

I think it's bad that it's too real.

TL Note: I changed Spirit World to Foreign World since I realized that it's actually about summoning the meteorite and don't want to confuse it with Seirei which also translate to Spirit. I'm sorry for people who have read it early.

1-3. The Start of Wandering Life!

"Hello, Suzuki here. My character name is Satou, but I'm Suzuki."

I want to talk with somebody instead of doing this monologue!

Since the dream continued with no sign of it being over, I decided to look for human habitation.
Thankfully at the edge of the wide map, there looks to be some kind of highway.

Three days since then. I've been been walking day and night yet am still only halfway there.
Stamina gradually decreases, but it's still 2800/3100. It decreased about 100 each day.
If this was a game, I should be okay for 28 days, more but I'm at my limit already.

I'm not sure if it's because of my stat or dream, but I don't feel tired. I did get sleepy but I endured it.
Right now I'm walking, even if I run the stamina decrease rate isn't really different. If I jump around the stamina decreases faster than running but honestly, it's still within margin of error.
Then why am I walking now? That's because I'm free.

You don't understand?
Yeah.

At the start I was singing a one man karaoke while running.
Originally my repertoire is small. I ran out of song immediately.
The surrounding scenery is magnificent but unfortunately it rarely changes.

Then, I decided to read the long log.

I'm not a text mania but since it's painful to silently walk an aimless road I began reading the log from the very first entry.

Of course, it's hard to read text while running, so the I began to walk. Absorbed with reading the log, I forgot my original purpose of getting onto the highway.

The log started with [Magic Art: All Map Exploration is used], then [Defeated~] messages for defeating Lizardmen and Dragonewts until the Dragon God.
Afterwards there's [Defeated All Enemies on the Map] and lastly [Source: Conquered Dragon God Valley]. Source? What's that? Mystery words pop out.

Then the log continue with loot and level up record.

The loot records occupy 80% of the log. Common gold and equipment. Then various dragon materials like horns, fangs and scales. Up to this I can understand the quantity and quality of the loot, but in contrast the remaining ones are strange.
Lizardmen and Dragonewts corpses are stored in the storage. Is it for Necromancer's use?
The rest are probably daily goods used by the scale tribe like food and fuel. I can't lay out such items though... furthermore, they're all named with [Broken~] as prefix, aren't these garbage?

As one would expect, reading through tens of thousands detail would be troublesome.
Thankfully, WW storage window allow you to search and classify by item type and user tag.

I designed them as a common interface to decrease working steps needed. I'm a bit proud making it on the same level as the latest OS filer.
Of course there's also optional folder functionality, but when you tap the stored item inside the bag, the the sub-type will expand and you can take it out without confirming.
<TLN: The run-on in this sentences is absolutely crazy, I'll appreciate help on this one. The trivia is not that important for the plot though so you can just interpret this whole geeky paragraph as : "It's awesome">.
Of course you can also take out the item by dragging it too. In addition, you can also put user registered items on custom tab. This was added because it's annoying to input search word every time on a smartphone.

Well, the story wandered off for a bit. I can't blabber on program scheme too long.

I open two storage windows to begin organizing items. First, I create folder for each general type. Then I will create sub-folder for sub-types inside.

In the setting screen I enabled the [Automatically Stack Identical Item Type] option.
Without this enabled, the total number of item would be too much.

By the way, we call overlapping position like this as stacking in FFW and WW. The term exists in most RPG's so I will omit the explanation. I wonder if the etymology comes from piling pieces in the old simulation board game?

Anyhow

Gold loot is mostly money.

The most numerous one is [Ancient Empire Gold Coin]. It's 1.001.2000, wow. I tried taking out one, it's quite big and heavy. It's about as big as a 500 Yen coin and as heavy as five 100 Yen coins. If I remember right, it's about 30 grams. Since in real world money, the coin is about 4-7 grams, this one is too big and heavy. If we calculate, the total is 303 Tons... an absurd weight. In the real world, about 2500 Tons of gold is mined a year. Hoarding so much gold like this, is very Dragon-ish.

The next numerous one is [Saga Empire Gold Coin] of about 40K. I'm interested whether there are many empires or if it was a new empire built after the former one was destroyed by dragon. I tried taking out this one too, it's a bit smaller than 500 Yen coin but the weight is only about 7 grams.

And the third, Crimson Treasure 30K. Fantasy-like money appears! Taking it out, it's about half as heavy as the ancient gold coin with ruby-like appearance. Sometimes it let out a flash of light from inside creating cyber (chick?) feeling. A bit mysterious.

The rest are 10K of [Ancient Empire] silver and copper coin. [Saga Empire]

and [Shiga Kingdom] silver, small silver, big copper, copper, pennies. [Drag Holy Kingdom] big silver, silver, copper, and various money with [~Kingdom] suffix. These are all in total 7000. For now, I sort it by country.

Still, WW and FFW didn't have sets of money... In WW it was called Wol, and in FFW it's Kaane, there's no other currency beside it.
These various currencies may come from the quiz show I saw during my break, impacting this dream.

There are also jewelry, ornaments and works of art besides money. A simple silver ring, emerald fist, ornamental crown, life-sized gold figure, decorative short sword, and many valuable looking things numbered about 300K.

Most are just expensive looking normal items, however there are magic items mixed in around 5% of the total.

The detailed information for the magic items are long so I skimped on reading it. Think of it like reading internet slang that you don't understand the meaning of on a bulletin board. There was no mounted jewelry in WW and FFW. <TLN: Okay this is so abrupt, I'm not sure what's what. This guy need an editor.>

Understanding some of the explanations, there are some things that catch my attention. Able to produce 100 litres of water a day, [Hell Water Jug (Water Bottle)].

I took out the [Hell Water Jug (Water Bottle)] when I found it and drank the water. I wanted to wash my face and hair with it but gave up since the dust from the meteor shower is still floating around.

Other things are; able to keep 1000 sheets of money, [Magic Wallet], stacking 30 varied types of up to 30 items, [30 Holding Bag]. I put those 3 things on favorite.

Since I have infinite storage, there's no point in a magic bag, but I like seeing a long sword slide in and out of the bag.

The second day ended with such feelings after organizing treasury.

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Moving on with this and that on the third day. The clock has crossed 0. I'm not sure if it's really the third day since I slip off the clock every 4 hours. Since I'd get tired if I sleep on this wastelands rough ground, I keep walking instead. There's a full moon tonight so there's no problem with visibility.

Having principle of saving the best dish the last, it's time to check for the weapons and armors.

I sort the type to show materials and corpses. According to the log There are only a few lizardmen and dragonewt corpses. This is most likely because of the meteorite, having received the full blow, there won't be many remains. However, there are a lot of dragon's corpse. Defeated Log shows that there are 2-3 times as many. This place become like a dragon version of an elephant's graveyard.

Most are materials from body parts, but there are also iron ingots, medicinal plants, timber, and stone. They're probably from the things crushed by the meteorites. Random body parts and scales are many. Regardless of type, there are 7.9600K of them. Even an old dragon skin mold and husk exist.

"Huge, if the scale is this big, wonder how huge is the body."

Losing to curiosity, I took out an adult dragon's scale, it's about 50 cm. While I'm at it, I took out lower dragon's scale to check, it's palm size.

[Broken] item are put in specific folder. I was thinking of throwing it away but stopped since it could become a literal mountain of garbage.

Finally, it's equipment.

There are around 30K things. The Scale tribe's spears are especially abundant, things which begin with [Scale Tribe's~] are around 20K. Neither are magic items, they're all normal items made of copper or iron. There are only few strange armors.

I tried taking out a scale tribe's spear. 2 meter long wooden handle with sharpened bone tip comes out. It can't pierce when I tried it out so it probably isn't a war spear.

The magic items are such like [Dragon Skin Armor] or [Dragon Scale Armor], seems like items blessed by the dominant tribe are around 100. Those are probably scale tribe armor.

The remaining 10K of half are [Dragon] based large swords, spears and bows. These are probably legacy from the (scale tribe) people who beat dragons.

The special effects kind are jewelry, but I don't understand the effects so let's put it off for now.

There are several interesting things, especially [Holy Sword] and [Divine Sword]
My long lost Chuuni heart is stimulated.

Why are these [Holy Sword]'s are named [Excalibur], [Durandal] and such? There are also katana's named [Muramasa] and [Kotetsu]

"Tension up~"

I enjoy wielding Excalibur. It should be quite heavy but I swing it carelessly. Beautiful traces of light come out. However for physical weapons isn't sword disadvantageous? But it's popular in flashy games.
Oh yeah, there is no specific name for the Divine Blade.

I expected to get sword skill when I wielded the sword, but it didn't happen. It will likely come out if I defeat an enemy with a sword.

Unusual things also exist. Cannons and ballistas That are usually placed on fort to counter flying enemy on the sky. Skimming the descriptions, it seems that it seems that it doesn't use gunpowder, but magic power instead.

Another one, it's gun!
Handgun 100, Rifle 50. Magic powered gun 12. Just for the record, there are no guns in FFW. There are cannons in WW though.

I take out the smallest magic gun.
It's a Derringer sized gun with excessive ornaments. The trigger guard is attached.

In the real world, guns have safety locks, over here it's a switch with 0, 1, 3, 10 scale. I set the scale to 1.

I aim at a rock nearby with one hand and pull the trigger.

A psshh sound comes out, yet no trace of the shot could be seen.
When I confirm the rock, a hole about as big as a 10 yen coin penetrated it.
It's a 2 meter thick hard rock. MP consumption is 1. There is no recoil, it's a laser gun like feeling. This is totally SF instead of fantasy.
With scale set at 10, the rock completely crushed. This would kill Ogre level demons in one shoot. MP consumption is 10.

"It's way too efficient."

It's an item that would totally break balance of a game. No one would want to use magic.

After that, I played around with the gun while moving for 1 hour.

◇

Finished checking items in general, I began thinking something that bugged me before.

"What is Source anyway?"
I mutter to myself.

It's about the [Source: Conquered Dragon God Valley] from the log.

...this is probably not related to tax withholding. <TLN: Source=Gensen, gensenchoushuu=tax withholding at the source>

Besides on the log, there's no mention of [Source: Conquered Dragon God

Valley] anywhere else.
Usually I would have said "It's a dream anyway" but something is bugging me.
Having a change of pace by thinking while running, I feel like coming up with something, I'm immersed in running while feeling good, I feel like anything's good.

I'm incoherent if I do so say myself.
Spending many days without any conversation is no good after all. I'm not suited for that.

I've walked for 1 day before I knew it, and finally almost reached the highway.
There is no human habitation according to map. I can see the highway leading to west on the north west.
By the way there's no presence beside me displayed on the map.
I wonder if they ran away in fear of that catastrophe aka meteorite shower with thunderous roaring and earthquakes.
I stopped the half-baked running and began walking.

"I want to take a bath~"

As expected, not having one in 3 days make my head itchy.
It's not possible to boil water, but there is water. Thankfully the dust cloud has lessened, it's possible to wash off the dirt.

I store my clothes and shoes into storage, find a suitable rock and pour water down from the top of my head.

"It's a bit cold, but I've come back to life."

Feeling relieved, I took out clean clothes from the loot and wipe off the water.
In order to take a refreshing nap, I take out a suitable bed with canopy from the loot and put it on the ground.

That day I slept for the first time after 3 days.

The next morning, I noticed that I could hang laundry on the canopy so I

wash my clothes with bucket from storage and hang them up, side by side.

After that I lazed around on the bed while eating jerky for half a day.
I'm expecting that someone will pass on the highway, but there's no change in radar, even untill afternoon.

"If this was a light novel or manga, I would have met a princess being attacked by thief~"

I like template ay.

"The service in my dream is so bad."

I turn a blind eye to the fact that I easily get treasures and significant level up, cursing my luck.
A flag would occur if this was a dream or tale, but nothing happened.

After changing into the dry clothes, I began walking toward the highway.

TLN: A chapter with a lot of geeky and trivia exposition. Please bear with me for a while.

1-4. Abandoned Village, Skill and Lost Child

"Hello, Suzuki's here. It's so lonely, I may die of loneliness."

I truly, genuinely want a companion.
After reaching the highway, I got lost on the route; it's been 7 days since then and I still haven't reached a human habitat.

Speaking of which, somehow I got these skills : [Sprint], [3 Dimensional Maneuver], [Jump], [Sing], [Camping] and [Washing].
However, those skills remain grey because I haven't allocated any points to them.

I seemed to have learned [Sprint][3D Maneuver] and [Jump] after the second meteor shower, but overlooked it due to the confusion.

When I was playing around with the gun, the map got in the way so I changed it and the log to icon view, then I noticed something. From the log it's written as place with bed and canopy but...
Isn't that a camping ground? I retorted myself.

◇

Onto 8th day, I finally found a village-like place on the wide area map.
I sprinted to the village. However there's no presence of people according to the map. I wonder if they're taking refuge or got destroyed. No, they should've gone back if they were taking refuge, since it's been one week.

Before long I reached the junction road heading to the village.

There stood a crude guidepost on the roadside. A 1.5 meter commonly made stick nailed to the ground. The destination is written with something like ink.

"I can't read it..."

Something is written there, but I can't read it at all. At least, it's different from all the languages I recognize from the real world. In fact it looks like some sort of fictional writing from a game.

I keep the map on maximum magnification, showing wide area.
While feeling slightly irritated for not being able to read the long awaited clue, I hit the junction on the map. There's no actual meaning to this action, but this time it seems to be a bull's eye.

"'Welcome to Enikei Village','Seryu City 32Km','Until Kazo Kingdom 105Km'; I can read it! ...Or rather, it's in Japanese!"

Pop up displays pile up above the map, each written in Japanese. Is this an effect of All Map Exploration? Cheers for opportunism.

For the time being, Seryuu City seems to be the closest from here, but it's too plain.

After all this time, let's go to the village first. I know that there's no one there, but I feel like I'm losing if I head straight on!
There might be some hidden quests there! If this is my dream, there must be one!!!

The village comes into view on the other side of the field in just about 5 minutes. Between the narrow street extends fields that looks like they have been abandoned for about a year. It's a world of weeds.

Even from a distance, I can distinguish that many house look burnt down. Every house has one thing in common; the roof is completely burned down.

Judging from the position it seems to be a "Village Abandoned by the Attack of the Dragons".

There are no bones lying around, but many things like harvest baskets, wooden hoes and various farming tools are scattered around as if they were left behind in hurry.

As I stared at the tools lying around, though it's too exaggerated to call it a revelation, I got a little idea.

"If I got washing skill from doing laundry. Maybe I'll get something if I dig some farm land?"

I took the hoe and dug the farmland with it.

>[Cultivation Skill Acquired]
>[Farming Skill Acquired]

It appeared on the log as expected. Though I didn't expect cultivation to pop up.
In order to get better, I'll try many other things.

Suddenly, I pluck what appears to be a vegetable peeping out between the weeds.

>[Harvest Skill Acquired]

It's a bit fun.
Even so, it's easy mode, eh?
Come to think of it, what is this vegetable? Is it spinach, komatsuna? <TLN: Wiki it :p>
I stared at it and AR message saying "Hisaya Grass, leaf vegetables. It's seldom eaten raw, usually processed as condiment or pickles." popped up on over the vegetables.

Yep, it's convenient alright. Seems like this is a different function than the map search.

Incidentally, I tried pulling out weeds.

>[Weeding Skill Acquired]

I didn't cut it, I just pulled it.

I went into something that looks like a windbreak, I take out an ax and chop down a suitable tree.

>[Lumbering Skill Acquired]

I wonder what next? I feel like trying some ideas.
I write a mathematical formula on the ground with the hoe.
『1+1=2』, there.

>[Arithmetic Skill Acquired]

Fumu, if this is OK then 『$E=mc^2$』

>[Lost Knowledge Skill Acquired]

The famous theory of relativity is a lost knowledge?
I'd rather get a flying skill or some such...

This time I'm writing some random characters in Japanese. <TLN: henohenomoheji, google it :P>

>[Painting Skill Acquired]

Painter-san would be mad.
Next I wrote ○× alternatively which made it looks like a children's play.

>[Game Skill Acquired]

Is anything fine?

I begin trying one thing after another.
I tried shaving the burned wood on the back of a house with knife in the shape of a stick.

>[Carpenter Skill Acquired]
>[Weapon Creation Skill Acquired]

In addition, I wrap the stick with a leather I took out of the storage.

>[Leather Craft Skill Acquired]

Making a makeshift broom I sweep it under my foot.

>[Cleaning Skill Acquired]

I'm running out of material. When I tried to find more I discovered a cemetery with a native god shrine.
Since I grew up in the countryside, I inadvertently join hands as if praying for my grandmother.
I offered some jerky and poured some sake cup.

>[Prayer Skill Acquired]
>[Title: Devout Believer Acquired]

Umu, I didn't intend to get a skill but...

The material is dry already, I began to get tired of the skill acquiring, let's get out of the village.
It's sunset just as I depart on the highway.
I'm walking toward Seryuu City, according to the guidepost. After accustoming my eyes under the moonlight, in the dark, I sprint down the highway.

When it's near dawn, the wide area map showed the whole Seryuu City. Of course, unlike Enikei Village it has a lot of people.
<TLN: Wut, it's only 30 Km away and you have enhanced speed...>

"Finally, finally civilization~~~"

I cry while trembling with expectation of finally talking with people.

....This is such a long dream. Don't you think so?

1-5. Fortress City Life Begin!

I finally got to Seryuu city.
Let's strip it naked with [All Map Exploration]!

The population is around 120,000. It's a remote region within Shiga Kingdom ruled by an earl. 95% are from the human tribes, the other 5% are beast tribes, scale tribes and fairy tribes. Average level is 2-3. Highest level is an old man magician who is 48. The knights range from 5-20 with most of them on 8-12. Normal soldiers are around 5-7. There are a lot of bows as a dragon countermeasure. Male to female ratio is 5:6 with lots of females. It's unknown whether it's because of difference in birth rate or because of a high male mortality rate.

Unexpectedly, townspeople only have a few skills. Most of them have 1-3 skills, some even none. Having 20 or so skills may be the exception rather than the rule.

Only a few magicians exist. There are only around 2000 people with magic skills. 90% of them have Livelihood magic while the remaining 10% seem to belong to the country's army.

It's as expected in a way, but level 310 is truly extraordinary. In addition, I got carried away and learned a lot of useless skills which would make me conspicuous.

The map could show the name of the streets and merchant's houses to some degree. Even though it could not tell you what kind of item they're selling or their reputation, it's still quite useful for a first look of the town.
Unfortunately, the search function only works for people, I could not find shops with it.
Seen from reduced scale, the town is shaped like a 6 Km diameter oval, along with two 3 Km long [く の] shaped, bowing daruma-like objects attached on each side.

I enlarge the map and confirm each area...

First, closest to the gate, there seems to be a general residential area. Beside the gate are stables and inns. Joining them, the local lord's castle is located in the center of the neighborhood. Something like a temple or magic-something is at the center of the city. Far from the gate, the lord's mansion stands. And a cafeteria that looks too small for city use, but too big as an exclusive for the local lord.
When I tried to search for people with [Adventurer] as job, I got nothing. There was no [Librarian] either, which probably mean there's no library. However, there were some [Slaves]...

After checking so many things, I've arrived at the front of the gate. Showing up together with the sun in the horizon, perfect timing! Though the gate is closed at this time.

I thought that there would be other people in front of the gate but there was actually no one.
It would be nice if there are some villagers who are going to sell their vegetables in the morning.

Is it only in my dream that stores don't open until 10 in the morning?!

Wearing a polo shirt and chinos pant might be too noticeable. I searched the storage, found several robes and took out the only non worn-out dark green robe to wear. The remaining robes are magic tools but they're too worn-out, I can't bring myself to wear them. This robe smells a bit like mold.

My body looks like the time when I was 15 with its small stature. The robe is too long and is dragging a little on the floor. Thanks to that, the sneakers are hidden. My mustache didn't even grow after one week. I was so happy and showed it off when it grew during the freshman period of university life. Though, I shaved it immediately when I got a girlfriend...

While having a recollection of the past, I continue to wait for the gate to open.

◇

「●●！　●●●●●●　●●●●●●●●●！！」

When I got near the gate an uncle soldier came out while saying some unknown words.
The long awaited conversation featuring a mysterious language!!

>Shiga Language Skill Acquired!

I love Easy Mode!
God hasn’t forsaken me!!

I operated the menu and acquired the Shiga language skills extremely fast! Overenthusiastically allocated 10 skill points with glee.

"What's wrong kiddo? Do you have a stomachache?"

A bearded soldier follows suit. I don't think calling a man in the latter half of his twenty, "kiddo", is right... Oh that's right, my outer appearance is that of 15 years old.

"Good morning. Yes, I'm fine."

I replied amiably with a vague smile, trademark of Japanese people. Even if the partner is a middle aged uncle, it's a human after a long time. A smile is only 0 Yen!

The heavy gate opened behind us during the conversation.

"Kiddo, show me your identification per the rules. If you don't have one, pay the 1 copper coin tax."

What--! ID in a dream!
I thought of showing the driver license from my wallet but it looked like it'd be troublesome so I stopped.

"I'm sorry, I don't have an ID card."

I honestly say it. If I got refused then I could just stealthily go in, if I got caught then I'd just run. I'm seriously acting self-important inside this dream! Yes, a dream! This is a dream!

"Did you lose it? We could issue a new one but that'd be 1 silver coin, ya okay with that?"

Oi oi, can you so easily issue a new one?
There are some Shiga silver coins in the storage if I'm not mistaken.

"Please allow me to get a new one! My horse, surprised by the loud roar 8 days ago, escaped while carrying my luggage. If I haven't got beef jerky in my pocket and didn't find some spring water on the way here, I would have been dead!

I'm a smooth talker if I do say myself~ I may truly have a talent for swindling.
As if responding to my inner monologue :

>[Excuse Skill Acquired]
>[Deception Skill Acquired]
>[Negotiation Skill Acquired]

Cheap skills!!!

"Come here kiddo!"

Uncle soldier beckon me to the guard station located besides the gate.
Even after telling excuses with great pain, uncle soldier just ignored it. His ignorability power-level is too high!

"Just in case, you're not on some wanted list or a thief, right?"
"Yes, of course."

I'm a member of general public unrelated to crime~

"Then, put both of your hands on top of this Yamato stone and speak your name."

Uncle guided me to the place with a 20" wide LCD display inside the guard station. Where in Yamato this Yamato stone can take me? Can it goes to space?
<TLN: Yamato in yamato, not sure what the heck he's talking about here

beside the reference to Space Battleship Yamato series.>

For name, it should be character name right~

"Satou."

Right after I spoke my character name. The lithograph started to dimly shine with blue light, and some words appeared.
It's the same letter as the one on the guidepost earlier. I could properly read it thanks to Shiga language skill. I want an English language skill!

"Kiddo, it's fine to release your hand now."

On the lithograph, [Race: Human],[Level: 1],[Class: Commoner],[Affiliation: None],[Occupation Type: Management],[Title: None],[Skill:None],[Reward and Punishment: None] are written.

Eh, isn't the level different?

Leaving me puzzled, uncle soldier smoothly wrote the displayed writing from the lithograph onto a paper using a quill. Finally, he stamped the entry form, [Person Approving: Retainer of Earl Souryuu, Knight Soun], with his ring on the place where his name is written.

"Here, don't lose it next time."

Uncle soldier passes me the certificate while I give him a silver coin and one big copper coin taken from my pocket.

"What, you can properly put money on pocket. Aren't you quite watchful! Keep your ID safe from now on."

"Also, don't forget this. Residence permit is only for 10 days. If you want to stay longer, apply your request here or at the ward in the town hall. Wherever it is, the procedure costs 3 copper coin."

"If you're caught in town with an expired permit during homeless hunt, the penalty will be 1 silver coin. If you can't pay it, you'll be forced to become a slave."

The explanation flowed smoothly, as if he's always doing it.
Let's be careful not to forget it.
Falling from vagrant to slave is severe! I wonder if it's the same with homeless hunting during Edo period?

"Thank you very much."
"Ou, you're welcome to the guard station for consultation if there's any trouble. Don't mind about the fee."

I've heard something good. Thank you, knight Soun.
I go out of the guard station with a polite farewell.

I took quite a bit of time inside the station, that the main road from before to inside the gate is now filled with people with an exotic feel.

◇

There's a semicircular space with a radius of about 20m between the gate and the town. Whether it is there to prevent confusion or for war, I don't know.

The certificate is made with material resembling Japanese paper. Even though the cityscape is in western style, the parchment is... Is it the limit of a dream?

I fold it carefully into my pocket. Of course, I put it directly into the Favorite folder inside my pocket.

Let's look for a change of clothes while strolling the main street for now! Even after many washings, it's painful to only wear one set of clothes.

"I want to take a bath before changing clothes..."

I tried to search for a bathhouse attendant, but it was not applicable. I'm wondering if I got the occupation name wrong or if there are no bathhouses in the first place. If it's the latter then I have no choice but to get hot water and take a bath inside my room in the inn later.

"You there! If you haven't decided on an inn then come to ours! I'll give you some service~!"
"Wh-What..."
"It's fine, it's fine, it's cheaper than all the others-- Not, but it is filled with a devotion to delicious food and clean bedding!"

When I was thinking about how to get into a bath, someone suddenly pulled my arm and my consciousness came back. A random high tension girl embraced my arm while pulling it. I wonder if she's a barker, it's a scene you usually see in a campus festival in modern Japan.

I'm dragged to a store that looks like a bar while thoroughly enjoying the soft feeling wrapped around my arm. Because I entered from the main street it feels dim.

"Mom! Mom! I brought a guest!"

Out of consideration for the softness transmitted to my arm, I have no more hesitation in deciding to stay in this inn. Yep, poyopoyo is justice!

"It's the first customer since the stars fell, isn't it... Hm? He doesn't have any luggage, is he really a guest?"

An aunty with a big body came out of the bars counter-like place. Contrary to her figure, she's a beautiful woman with a face filled with dignity. I think she's about 30? I'm sorry for calling you aunty.

However, even though these mother-daughter pair are natural beauties, why are they fat! Lose 10, no 20 Kg, and they would be in my strike zone!!

Though I'm out if she's a married woman. An affair will only make everyone involved unhappy!

"Because of that, er, starfall? My luggage ran out with my horse due to the uproar... Fortunately my wallet is safe, and I somehow got into this city~"
"That's a disaster. Our inn charges 1 big copper coin for one night. If you're fine with sleeping together with other guests in a big room then it'd be 2 copper coin. Meal is served at this bar for one serving. It's the limited service for an accommodation."

Fumu, I don't know the market price, so let's investigate the value of big copper coin and silver coin by paying for 10 days.
The landlady has arithmetic and cleaning skill so there won't be any mistake with calculation.

"Then, it's for 10 days please."
"Okay, it's exactly 2 silver coins then."

I take out 2 silver coins and pass it to the landlady.
It seems that 5 big copper coins equal 1 silver. It doesn't seem like she miscalculated either.

"Landlady, could I have my meal now? If possible a light one."
"If it's something like oatmeal, black bread, or vegetables then I could get it out right now. And I'm sorry but meat hasn't appeared in the market, so there's none of that."
"Then black bread and a stew please."
"Okay, I'll bring it immediately, so just sit there. Martha, write the guest book for our customer here."

The landlady goes to a place that looks like a kitchen, and in her place, a poster girl who looks like a head clerk from a historical drama holding a notebook tied up with string, Martha-chan, skips here.
She's cute but she looks around a high schooler's age? A bit too young for me.

"Ye~s, I'm writing for you so can you give me your name?"
"It's Satou."
"Okay Satou. Your occupation and age please."

I almost said 29 year old programmer. According to Status screen, it should be 15 years old.

"A peddler, 15 years old."
Martha-chan smoothly fills the notebook. It looks to use yellow papers like the one used on Japanese calligraphy.
When Martha attempted to chat after writing the inn registry, the landlady came out and told her to clean the 2nd floor.

The crystal clear stew with consomme-like soup, cabbage and carrot-like vegetables, and as announced before, without meat, is more delicious than I expected. There are 3 slices of about 2 cm thick black bread. It's harder than what I've heard, but feels about as hard as senbei. It looks like it would fill your stomach. I bite it full of curiosity. It feels like a meal full of strange SFX.

Feeling satisfied for a meal after a long while, I pay the price. 1 copper coin. Usually it's prepaid.

Come to think of it, Martha and the landlady use loanwords like service and oatmeal normally, but when I observed their lips, I know that they're speaking different words. I wonder if it's an appropriation of the Shiga language words.

>[Lip Reading Skill Acquired]

...Ya~y, I can become a spy or a detective~ orz.

Or rather,

"Landlady-san, I intend to buy some groceries and a change of clothes, do you know any good places?"

Although I know stores location from the map, there are too many of them, I don't feel like going around all of them.

"If you want something with high quality material, then the tailor on the city center would be the best. For something reasonable then the east is good, and if you want it cheap then the west. If you have money in excess then you could tailor it on the high class shop at the inner wall, but you'd need gold coin. General good stores usually open near clothing stores, so please plan your budget carefully."

"Thank you very much. I'll go to the east street since tailoring seems that it would take some time."
"Okay, although there's Chian on the east, be careful of pickpockets. Since sometimes there are migrant workers from the west there."

"Yes, I will be careful."

I leave the inn while thanking the landlady for the advice.
It's starting to get hard to say that this is a dream. But I will work hard!

TLN: Since the next few chapters are quite slow paced, I will hold off on releasing a chapter a day and will release only after I've finished translating up to chapter 8. Please understand. ;)

1-6. The Marketplace, the Princess and the Slave Trade

Satou's here. It's Suzuki but I'm Satou. This is a dream right? Please say that this is a dream, Johny.

◇

A slight unrest began to arise inside my mind, when I went shopping on the earl's territory metropolitan, Seryuu city.
It's a few minutes walk to the east of Martha's mother inn.
Come to think of it, I haven't heard the name of the inn, the map says Monzen Inn; is that it?

Immediately after entering a series of food stalls, I smell something good.
Eh? Isn't this the smell of soy sauce?
Okonomiyaki and crepes are being baked on an iron plate. The seasoning seems to be soy sauce. Just as I thought, it's fine to call this a dream. There's no way soy sauce exists in a fantasy!

Even though I've just had a meal, I buy one of them.

"Yep, it's delicious."

I want pork cutlet sauce rather than soy sauce. The other stalls seems to be frying something that looks like croquettes. What a high food culture for a fantasy!

I'm going around various stalls, trying various foods.

"How much is this gabo for 3 serving?"
"It's 2 Pennies."
"Expensive, isn't it 1 penny?"
"young maam, like that, we couldn't eat then; How about 2 pennies for 4

then?"
"Give me 5 for 2."
"It can't be helped, since young maam's a beauty, I'll give in."

I listened to some interesting conversation between an aunty and a food stall owner. Haggling basic eh? Since I'm accustomed with just buying what's written on the price tag, it looks difficult.

>[Eavesdropping Skill Acquired]

"Anything I can help, young man?"
Fumu, from the conversation earlier a gabo seems to be about 0.4-0.5 pennies a pop. Since this uncle has arithmetic skill, he should've been able to calculate the minimum amount.
"I want to buy 2 gabo, is it alright with 1 penny?"
"You've heard the conversation just now eh? It's alright then. Young man have arithmetic skill too right. You're pretty good for such young man."
It's just a normal mental arithmetic though...
I got 2 gabo fruit for 1 penny. Gabo is actually a fist-sized red pumpkin fruit. Incidentally, penny is an oblong shaped coin weighing about 1 gram, it's a yellow-ish copper coin with high impurity.

>[Estimation Skill Acquired]
>[Haggling Skill Acquired]

But I didn't haggle it?
Is it because I saw the earlier haggle by the aunty?

While wondering what to do with the gabo fruit I looked around me. The stalls are all around the size of half a tatami yet there are many of them. Furthermore they're lively.

While looking around the stalls I raised [Estimation], [Haggling], [Arithmetic], [Negotiation], and [Scamming] skills to the max level.

After strolling around for 10 minutes, I finally found my goal.

I choose a large shoulder bag from one of the stall. The price is displayed over the bag thanks to the estimation skill. Handy.

It seems that I'd get hated if I suddenly bought it on market price. I understood the knack after 3 stores. I could get it to half the market price if I try to bargain for 3-4 times... but honestly, it's annoying.

The spoils from the stalls... [Large Shoulder Bag], [A Bit Stylish Bag], [Commoner's Underwear for Top and Bottom + 10 set], [Hand Towel in Various Size, and Handkerchief]. The towel is just two piece of clothes stacked together, I'm a bit dissatisfied.
Also, even though I can't sew, [2 Meter Hemp Cord - 5 Bundles], [Cotton Thread - 1 Roll], [Sewing Needle - 5], [Sewing Scissors], [Cotton Cloth], somehow there's a lot of them. Since I have the storage, there's no problem even if a lot of them end up unused.
In all it's 4 silver coins. Unexpectedly, clothing is more expensive than foods.

I don't think I need to say this, but the first thing I bought, the shoulder bag, is a dummy. I will put things I bought into the bag and directly send it to the storage without being seen. I put some commoner's clothes inside the bag so that it doesn't look flat.

I wanted to buy some some robes or cloaks but, only worn-out or cheap looking things were available so I didn't.

That's right, I want to confirm heat retention of the storage. I'll buy some properly hot things and put it inside.
Shopping is fun~

"Now then, I wonder what else?"

Chair lined up ahead of the stalls and there are a lot of old mans are drinking sake since morning.

"Drinking in daytime... Oh yea, tableware!"

There should've been a shop that sells them among the one I've visited so far.
That's right, shoes! I forgot about shoes.

I want a reminder~. There's a memo field inside the [Exchange] tab of the Menu, let's put the shopping list there.

It's been a while since I saw the Exchange tab, over there I found the reason why I was level 1 when I entered the city.
Those status was the same as the one written in this page. The upper limit for each attributes are chosen from the drop down box here. Even the skills and title can be chosen as [None].

I could give false info however I want, huh...

I buy a pair of shoes suitable for rough journey, and a robe matching the shoes, also a sandal for each foot.
I thought of buying everything since I have the storage but I can't find shoes with correct size. I'll just order it on the main street's shoes store later.

Hungry after a second round trip, I set my eyes on a store selling something that looks like shoyu ramen and went into it. Although the noodles are different, it's a proper ramen.
Other was kneaded flour coiled in a stick varnished with miso-like substance then baked. It felt like a mismatch, but it was properly delicious.

I also bought cups, pots, tableware that caught my attention, I bought them all. Also, a kitchen knife, hot pot and frying pan. Somehow there were no cutting boards, do people here don't use them?

I casually bought a bathtub made of metal. As one would expect, the tub is too big to place into the bag so I brought it quietly to the back of an alley and put it into the storage. And since it would look unnatural if I went back into the east avenue, I decided to exit onto the the main street.

◇

At the east street stalls overflow, making the street there squeezed on the center. Here, the main street is about 6 meter width, horse carriage and human-powered cart are going back and forth on it.

Just like the street earlier, different from what I imagined of a fantasy, the street here are very clean. There are no body of dead animals lying around.

There are also no bum on the alleyway.

The stalls are sparse here unlike on the east street, in exchange there are a lot of stores instead. There are many people with good attire walking around the street.

"Are collars popular?"

The people who are pulling carts generally wear collar. When I search for it, they're slaves. Mysteriously, all the slaves wear collars, reason unknown.

A carriage coming from the downtown drop its speed to match the walking speed of the pedestrians.

The carriage passes in front of me. There are around 10 woman slaves inside.
My eyes are glued to one of them. A girl befitting to be called Yamato Nadeshiko featuring black hair and black eye, although she looks like she's been in a long journey. Since the great majority of people looks like northern European, this is probably the first time I've seen Asian face.
The girl set her eyes downcast, our eyes met when she lift it up and even though there's no dramatic development, somehow the little girl featuring orthodox northern European face with light violet wavy hair standing next to her looked very surprised when she saw me. No well, It's troubling when you stare so hard at me... I'm not into loli.

When I took a long look at the little girl, a pop up with her name and level appeared next to her.

Arisa. Level 10. Her level is high for a little girl.

Further informations appear.

11 years old.

Title: [Witch of the Lost Kingdom][Mad Princess]

Skill: Unknown

The carriage disappear toward the west street.

Frankly, those were some trouble inviting titles... No no, I won't approach it okay? Absolutely!

◇

Let's go back to my original purpose.
I searched the map for tailor or shoemaker, and found them gathered near the side street, so I went there. Most of them had young women clerks which isn't fit for an old man, so I went into the shop with a kindhearted looking middle-aged couple.

"Pardon me, Do you have a solid merchant-like robe with calm color?"
"Welcome, please come over here, we will bring you sample cloths. There were 5 ready made goods on the rack there, but it's been selling well recently."

The husband guide me to the lounge and take out the samples from the interior. In harmony, the wife bring out tea-like drink. It's an elegant cup.

"Since it'll be cold from now on, how about this thick fabric? If you're going on a journey then we can also prepare a matching waterproof cloak, how about it sir?"

These are excellent goods. Maybe. These are the types that the largest clothing store buy a lot with a lot of color variety, The 5 variety of the well selling goods probably also have cloak order accompanying them <TLN: I'm sorry, this sentences is total gibberish for me too in the raw>.
The tailoring will need 5 days to finish. If I only buy one then it's only 3 days.
5 gold is quite a large sum, but it's a money needed for necessary things. However, I want at least 1 change of robe before the day is over. I feel like I don't know the TPO if I go the inner wall with this battered robe I'm wearing.

"Master, since this shop is only for tailoring, do you know shops selling ready made goods? As you can see the robe I'm wearing is battered from the journey, I want to buy temporary clothes before the tailoring is done."

<TLN: Not sure why Satou call the shopkeeper goshujin>

"For ready clothes, I recommend Poel Clothing on the Teputa street. Although it's my stupid son's clothes, I can assure his cloth-making skill. It's quite famous among the commoner so it's quite enough for temporary clothes."

Promoting his son's shop eh... I politely refuse when he's offering to draw a map, it's enough with oral instruction so I get out of the shop. I almost forgot to take the deposit receipt until I was called by the Mrs. Shopkeeper in hurry.

I bought two robes, one is a calming dark brown color and the other is a gaudy red with yellow stripes. The former is as said before, and the latter, let's omit the story behind it. My line of vision went into the valley of the female clerk...

Of course I also order shoes on the tailor. 1 for walking in the city, 2 boots for journey.

When I came back to the Martha's inn after shopping, the sun was already sinking for the day.

1-7. Open Air Bath, Objective and Sightseeing

"Satou's here. The petty one who doesn't want to get involved with the dangerous looking slave, Satou."

It's a dream! My self-suggestion is reaching the limit.

It's another world that's most likely a dream, become my compromise. Yes, however small the possibility is, I won't give up.

◇

My heart broke when Martha said that a bathroom is not available except at the lord's castle. Since the food and sanitation culture of the town were pretty high, I thought that bathrooms also mattered.

I thought of bathing in the room with the tub, but since it'd get the room moldy due to the moisture, I was told to do it in the backyard since it also has a well.

The backyard is about 6 tatami wide. The well is not that far from the back door, it's not equipped with a pump and is the type that uses buckets to draw water, usually used in older days. I'm using one of the two wooden tubs available.

I thought that I would struggle but thanks to my high (STR) status, it was easy.

Thought they said backyard, the fences are only around my waist high. Even though there are only few pedestrians traffic, there are still some. It's already dim during the dusk but if I take a bath in place like this, isn't this like an exhibition?

When I look around, there's a partitioning screen near the back door.

I see, am I meant to use this?

After I put up the screen, I started bathing with the cold water.

Though it's only about as high as my waist, it's enough for shielding the view.

...Dang, I forgot to buy soap!

There's probably no shampoo, but if it's just soap it should be available. Let's look for it tomorrow.

A woman comes out of the back door. It's a blond beauty on later half of her 20. How do I say this, this town has a lot of beautiful woman.

Our eyes match.

Iya~n.

...Disgusting. I'm disgusted with myself.

After the woman finished drawing the water into the tub, she started bathing after putting the screen.

There's a screen between us, it is, but!

Whenever she moves a little, the upper body is!

Well, I estimate it to be D cup, purunpurun, it's asserting itself!

She did cover it by hand, but it got unexposed occasionally...

No, no, I'm not a DT, I summon all my strength to avert my gaze and go back to wash my body. Restrain yourself my healthy lower body!

I glanced at the female's face, she's wearing an expression full of deliberate composure!

As I thought, adult women are nice!!

I wipe my clean body with the towel... Wonder where I should put the

water.

There is no drainage.

"It's okay to sprinkle the water on the garden plants. There's a drainage below the plants."

I wonder if I looked pathetic since the woman teach me. I thanked her and went back to the inn after throwing the water.

I want you to overlook my glance during my way back.

>[Surveillance Skill Acquired]

>[Poker Face Skill Acquired]

◇

I changed into the new robe after bathing, feeling refreshed.

The dinner was still mainly vegetables, but the taste really came out, it was delicious. Though I prefer it to be a tad thicker.

The service was raw salad. I'd be happier if it were meat...

I feel that the protein was a bit insufficient, so I took out jerky from my pocket and gnaw on it.

I wanted to drink sake, but the customers around me drink an unrefined looking local sake, causing my craving to stop. I want to drink some cold beer~

After the meal, there is no light when I come back to my room. Not even light from magic. Work harder, Fantasy!

When I ask the landlady who's struggling with drunken people, "It's 1 copper coin if you want a lamp", so she says. By the way, the lamp has to be returned later. It seems that the guys who are awake stay in the bar to drink the night away, only the guys who want to sleep go back to their

room. <TLN:duh!>

The toilet is shared together, scooping styled. When I think about it, doing it on the outdoor like I always did until yesterday is better than this. There's a bundle of straw that looks like a wiping cloth. Since it seem that I'd get hemorrhoid if use that, I cut a handkerchief in suitable size and use it. This isn't eco-friendly, but I don't want to save for this kind of thing!

I come back to the room after finishing the business.

The light from the lamp is dim. There's probably some magic items able to be used as illumination among the loots, but I'm afraid that the inn could be half destroyed if I take out the wrong item.

The rented room is 8 tatami wide with a single sized wooden bed, there are also chair and desk. The chair having no roller legs is a matter of course, but even the desk doesn't have a drawer.

The window is small enough that when you put your face to look outside it feels cramped. I wonder if it's for ventilation, the landlady warned me to close it before I sleep to prevent crime.

Fortunately, I can still see the menu screen even in the dark.

◇

From now on, let's fill the memo column in the menu with objectives.

Act 1. Let's really think about whether this is a dream or reality.

For the time being, as to not have anything that I'd regret later if this was really a real another world, let's temporary recognize that this is really another world. Yes, temporarily. I can't give up in that regard!

Act 2. Let's be wary of the surroundings.

Even though I could escape from danger thanks to my high level, I should not act too antisocial that it would hinder me from touring another world. Also, although I don't know how strong they are, there are gods here; let's

not be overconfident of my own ability and act careless.

Act 3. Let's obtain means for self-defense.

I want to obtain a method to neutralize opponents, or skills and magic to weather through a troublesome situation. I want to refrain from raining meteors every time there's trouble.

Act 4. I want to find a way back to reality.

If it's a dream then a way to wake up, if it's thrown into another world situation then let's find a way to go back. I don't intend to act too positive though.

Act 5. Might as well enjoy the exotic atmosphere.

With how real this all feel, sightseeing is enjoyable. My budget is plentiful anyway.

Let's ask Mr. knight if there's do-it-all person who's willing to guide me for a tour.

Are these all?

I added soap in the postscript before I slept.

◇

"This is the first time I've been asked to be a tour guide."

So she says, the 20 years old jack-of-all-trades, Nadi-san, while laughing bashfully. She's not a beauty, but she's full of cute gestures. She must be plainly popular.

Normally she's a contractor for miscellaneous job from the worker guild, apparently, hired to become a tour guide is quite unusual.

Since walking is a pain, I borrow a roofless horse-drawn carriage to tour the town.

"The west street is not too prosperous so the citizen not only deal with the front store, but also various slightly gray goods in the back."

"For example?"

"Well, something like love potion on the alchemist and pawn shop, moneylender, even brothels exist. The slave company is also located on the same street."

I reacted to "slave" word. I don't want to meet that little girl~ I can only feel trouble from her.

"Oh? Do you have an interest for slaves? Guard job is impossible, but they can be made to carry your load or chore during your journey. Most peddlers usually employ them."

"Recently they closed after the stars fell before, but they're going to resume. They will open 3 days after the day after tomorrow."

It seems that the slaves that the slave company buy are leftovers from the slave market or in training, there's usually a slave auction held once a month.

"If you want to hire guards for the journey, then there are a lot of them gathered in the bar. Since it's hard to find trusty ones, in case the need arise, do ask [Jack-of-All-Trades] by all means!"
<TLN: Not sure if she's talking about herself or the worker guild>

The carriage proceed along the inner wall of the west street.

"Around here is the craftsmen's block. Woodwork, blacksmithing, leather craft and many other craftsmen are here. Most of them don't have an actual store. Generally they open small store or stall and directly sell their products to the customer in person."

Can they repair weapon and armor over here?

"If you have a craftsman acquaintance there then there's no problem but generally to prevent trouble, one usually go to the arms shop as an

intermediate. There are high class arms shops within the inner wall for knights, and shops for soldiers and general public on the Biso street in the eastern town. Hunters like to go to the western town since there are a lot of meat processing stores, there along with an arms shop."

Let's just roughly look at each store on the street. It probably won't end in one day.

Come to think of it, isn't the lord's mansion located in the north?

"You're well informed. Do you want to look inside the inner wall for a bit? Though there's only harvest work to be seen there."

Well, I'd hate to be mistaken as a food thief if I walk there on foot.

The carriage proceed along the western inner wall, toward the narrow street between the inner and outer wall.

After advancing for a while we got to the open gate, the soldiers guarding the gate are present too. The driver nods to the guard and continue to enter the northern district.

There's a vast farm land over there. The carriage continue on the farm road. The farmers are harvesting Gabo, the same fruit I bought yesterday.

I don't know if it's normal, but there are a lot of kids around elementary school age helping.

"Those children are probably from the orphanage, since it's currently harvest season, the children from the town might be coming here to work."

Even children work? No more neet?!

My face became strange for a little while.

"If they're not from wealthy family, then children around that age normally work."

Don't they go to school? WHO please, support Seryuu City!

"School? If they're nobles or come from wealthy family then they usually study in private, but schools only exist in the royal capital."

"Furthermore, the Gabo fruits those children harvest are actually staple foods for people with light wallets."

Hmm? But the inn serves bread and thin rice porridge, sometimes even stew right?

"No well, Monzen inn is relatively high level so they don't serve Gabo fruit. On the west street, most stalls are selling flat bread, gruel, and pickled vegetables. It has strong smell, bitter, and hard to chew so the wealthy rarely ever eat it. Since you can eat cheap things until your stomach full, they're not only eaten by the orphanage children but also by about half of the general populace too."

If it's like that, won't normal potatoes suffice?

"The quantity of the yearly harvest differ. Although the harvest area becomes smaller, they could be harvested in one month period and rarely fail. Furthermore it has a property that enable it to fertilize fallow. Thanks to Gabo fruit, the number of orphanages has increased dramatically."

What a convenient fantasy fruit. Even opportunism has limit.

Even so, Nadi-san is quite knowledgeable... she looks like a literary woman graduated from the royal capital school.

"I wasn't raised in the manor inside the wall, the food situation in rural area was pretty terrible."

She grew up outside eh, I wonder if the lord has a monopoly. It's a subtle mystery.

"It's goblin's favorite food. If it's not a place surrounded by wall like this, goblins would come in a blink of an eye and devour them greedily."

"Back in the day, there was an explosive increase of goblins in the northern

part of the kingdom, the scholar who investigated the cause concluded that it's related to Gabo fruit. In those days, if someone found a Gabo tree they would burn it down, then it began to be used as a food source and now it has become the staple food of the lower strata people. However, even now, if someone finds a Gabo tree, they would burn it down."

The wall around the farm is quite a bit lower than the town's wall. Is it around 2 meter and a half?

I wonder what that tower standing tall 1 kilometer away is? It's been in my mind since before I entered the farm. It's around 20 meter tall and look surprisingly rugged.

"That's a self defense mechanism built to repulse Wyvern attacks. The one in the castle is for the castle's defense, the one here is used when the attacks come to the farm."

"About 40 years ago when the black dragon attacked, it played a very big role. Back then, although a tower half as tall as this was brought down, the records depicting the successful repelling remain."

Repel... Did it escape through the sky?

"Leaving aside the Wyvern, as expected, defeating true dragon is impossible. Only someone like the ancestor king, Yamato who was a great magician or Saga empire's hero are able to do something like that."

...Hero, eh?

"Saga empire has this hero's summoning great magic. Since the compensation is enormous, except when the 66 year Demon King's resurrection cycle begin, it's not performed. Yamato-sama and Saga Empire's founder were also heroes who were summoned when the world was in crisis back in the day. It's so dreamy."

As I thought, these Yamato and Saga-san... I can slightly see through why the holy swords were named Excalibur and such.

When the story was finished, the one lap tour around the farm was also finished. The carriage went back towards the inner wall.

1-8. The Demon, the Knight and the Magician

Satou's here. Dumbfounded because the long awaited route abruptly closed.

◇

An existence that can only be expressed as a demon descended.

Having horns like a ram, dark red glowing eyes, and a jet black gleaming body. Four arms, bat wings, and a split stinger tail. Truly a demon.

The demon mowed down the knights effortlessly.

The plaza became full of toppled carriages and dead bodies scattered around...

It suddenly appeared in the middle of a peaceful afternoon.

◇

The inner wall is mostly occupied by mansions of the nobles and the wealthy, while the shops are only located on the side of the main street leading to the castle.

When we arrived at the inner wall, we got off the carriage and started taking a stroll around the luxury shops guided by Nadi-san.

"This is the shop who sells the high class armor for the knights. The shop doesn't only have metal armor. Sometimes they have magic armor available. You'd need dozens of gold coin for that~"

"This one here is the largest jewelry shop around. Especially their service for ruby and sapphire is the best in the kingdom. As for commoners, I recommend Liz jewelry across the street."

"If you want robes tailored, then this shop is good. Although it had been on the wane for a bit; last year, after the son who come back from the royal capital succeeded the shop, it became awfully popular. Since 1 article cost around 2-3 gold coin, commoners don't come here but it may be a good idea for merchants who just got a big job to order here to increase their prestige."

Nadi-san is so wiki-certified knowledgeable. As expected of a jack-of-all-trades?
Although luxurious looking horse-carriages come and go from the castle to the plaza, the traffic is relatively sparse for our carriage to stop on the road.

I wonder if Nadi-san is thirsty after that much talking?

"This is the most popular open terrace shop for sweets and tea among women in Seryuu city."

Nadi-san's eyes are sparkling. It doesn't seem like a plea, just pure longing.

"Nadi-san, my throat has dried up, since we're here already let's take a break there."
"Yes, I understand. Please go ahead, I will wait here."

...hmm?

Suddenly, a lonely decision?!

"You don't want to enter, Nadi-san?"

"I'm sorry, since this is a high class tea shop..."

"Please tell me stories about the castle and the plaza while we drink. Of course, I will pay for the tea and sweets."

Nadi-san's eyes are shining... but it quickly become cloudy. Is it that expensive?
Let's be forceful here!

"Let's go."

I tenderly led her hand inside the shop.

◇

I was a bit prepared for it, but a set of tea and sweets are only 1 silver coin. Isn't that cheap? That was what I thought, but considering that amount will let you stay for 5 days in a high class inn, it's probably quite expensive for the general public.

Even though it's an open terrace cafe, they put stylish marble tables there. The teacup and the pot look expensive too.
The tea tastes like an Assam tea. It doesn't seem like they put sugar and milk though.
In exchange, they serve it along with sweet baked cookies. It seems that you eat it with cottage cheese or jam spread.

Is this that desirable? When I look at the girls in the surroundings, everyone is eating something that looks like hotcakes full of honey cream.

So I called the waiter and asked for two serving of the hotcakes. It's 3 silver coin.

"Delicious~~~"

It's certainly delicious... Particularly the charming happy expression from Nadi-san's face!

Even while enjoying the sweets, Nadi-san didn't forget her professional duty, she talked about the land reclamation of the Seryuu city castle and various other things.

Such peaceful afternoon tea time did not last long...

Initially, a big shadow passes through the plaza.

Followed by deep bass screams.

Crossing the plaza, a gigantic fireball pierces into the castle.

One spire crumbles forward.

After the cloud of dust and the sound from the collapsed spire expire, the people who were frozen in the plaza restarted. Screams arise, soldiers urge them to take shelter in angry voice.

The four armed demon float in the plaza while spreading his black wings.

"Is there a custom for a demon to come play in the afternoon in this town?"

"There is no such thing! Quickly, let's escape!"

>[Nonchalant Skill Acquired]

I said something foolish. Nadi-san pulled my arm to urge me to escape but maybe her waist lost its strength, she can't get up.

Though it's shameful, I look at the situation around me to incite me to act. Somehow I can't digest the acquired information very well. As if my body is moving separately from my head.

When the second fireball crosses through the rampart to the castle wall, a semi-transparent blue barrier stretched in the sky, and the fireball stopped.

Just before the barrier set, groups of knights and magicians come out of the castle wall.

Besiege him! Why don't you guys utilize the castle's defense?
For someone so pathetic he can't even get up off his chair, I cursed at the knights. Even though I got knowledge about battle only from manga and games...

The demon lands on a flower bed in the center of the plaza. He deliberately choose to fight on the ground instead of in the sky with its advantage.

The heavy infantries in the back let loose a rain of arrows. Sounding like violent rainfall, the plaza is pierced. Unfortunately every arrow that hit the black body of the demon is repelled.

3 cavalry knights holding lances on their left hand line up to assault the demon together. The demon exhales purple breath from his mouth toward the knights. Is that a poisonous breath? The face of the knights and the horse who got direct hits look pretty terrible. The knights who lose their vigor fell off their mounts and got kicked by the demon, flying to their companions.

From the opposite side of those knights, another 3 cavalry rush forward! Although the first two knights got mowed down by the demon's tail, the other one who was late successfully impaled the demon's body with their lance.
The knights who got mowed down by the tail stand up, and strike the demon with their swords.

The demon parries the knights' attack with his claws and roars!
Debris and little rocks rise and swirl around the center of the demon's jet black body, the swirling speed gradually increase...

A chilling premonition crawls up my spine!
I lift my body off the chair. I thought of escaping but Nadi-san, who's still weak in her waist and can't get up, entered my vision.

There is no time. Escape is impossible.

I pulled down Nadi-san from the chair, and direct the thick marble desk toward the demon as a shield.
I couldn't see it from my position, but at this time, the demon unleash shockwaves of vacuum blades in all directions.

It was close but I managed to hold Nadi-san behind the marble desk. Heavy impact shock the desk. Part of the marble was blown off from the vacuum blade. The view from the open terrace becomes tragic.

The shops surrounding the plaza are either partially or completely destroyed. One is even struck with a small carriage terribly.

I took a sidelong glance at the demon who began to walk toward the soldiers who were struck with the shockwave, and carry the unconscious Nadi-san to leave the plaza.

I run like the wind toward the main street while carrying Nadi-san.
The people who are evacuating are hustling to the inner wall, it's a dangerous situation.

I turn down a side street before arriving at a packed crowd. Since both my hands are occupied, I operated the menu with thought and raise the [3D Maneuver] and [Jump] skill to level 10.

Approaching the inner wall, I found a big building. Jumping while alternating between the inner wall and the building's wall like a ninja in manga, I cross over the inner wall.

>[Retreat Skill Acquired]

When I check the map, it seems that here is the verge of the east town.
I forcibly stop a carriage that happen to pass by and ask the driver to escort Nadi-san to the worker's guild. The coachman is reluctant at first but he cheerfully undertook the job when I shove him a gold coin.

>[Persuasion Skill Acquired]
>[Bribing Skill Acquired]

This is not the time to scrimp on money.

I rely on the memory from yesterday, and take out a certain item from the storage while running.

1-9. Let's Dance with the Demon! [First Part]

Satou's here. Finding out my incompetence, Satou.

Real demon is way too scary.

Especially that roar!

Please do try hearing a lion's roar while standing close to the cage in a zoo. No matter how safe you know you actually are, if your heart isn't prepared, scary thing is scary.

◇

I came to the rooftop of a building where the plaza can be seen.
From there I could see the demon and dozens of soldiers encircling it.
Furthermore, the soldiers from the gate are protecting magicians behind them.
Maybe the knights are seeing a chance for assault, the cavalries joined into formation with the soldiers in the back.

The demon became the victim of the spear thrusts and arrows by the soldiers from the back.
Apparently the demon is playing around.
The assaults didn't do anything, he catches the soldiers who attack him and seems to enjoy breaking their bones.

If the demon is the same existence as the ancient one, the soldiers probably taste terrifying fear and anger from seeing their friends killed.

"Now then, it's good that I'm back, but there is no room to intervene in close combat."

My appearance differs from what I wore earlier, now donning a worn-out cloak with a hood. Since I know that it'll get dirty anyway, I don't wear the expensive one.

I take out the magic gun from my bosom. It's not the handgun type, but the one that resemble rifle with big scope.
The demon moves around 300 meter away, so it's hard to take aim.

Right at the time when the soldiers pull away, the magicians cast magic that buries the lower half of the demon's body in the ground.

I pull the trigger on this good opportunity while the demon is unable to move.

And missed.

Apparently I was too tense when I pulled the trigger the line of fire came down a bit.
Fortunately I did not accidentally shoot the soldier.

The demon continuously got hit by fire and lightning magic, but encircled by a barrier, he doesn't seem to take any damage.

The moment the demon stopped moving I rapidly fire the magic gun, set at the lowest setting.

The third shot finally hit! Beside the demon a gauge appeared and decreased by a little bit.

"What is this, a game?"

>[Shooting Skill Acquired]
>[Aiming Skill Acquired]
>[Sniping Skill Acquired]

In the corner of my view, the small log window displays messages for acquiring skill.

Looking away was a bad move. Without any time to avoid, a lightning bolt sent by the demon hit me. After hitting me hard the lightning struck the foothold I'm on. The roof of the building got destroyed.

>[Lightning Magic: Demon Skill Acquired]
>[Lightning Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Paralyze Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Pain Tolerance Skill Acquired]

"Ouch ouch, my hands and feet are tingling."

If I had to say, it feels like the numbness you got after doing seiza. When I look at my own HP gauge, I've received 5 point of damage.

Come to think of it, I haven't checked the level of the demon...
I lament for a moment.

"How temperamental is that thing?"

For the time being, let's quickly look at the important things. Demon tribe, level 62, [Lightning Magic: Demon], [Wind Magic: Demon], [Darkness Magic: Demon], [Fighting], [Flight] skills.

I push aside the building's wreckage. It doesn't seem like I'm being pursued.

>[Self-Healing Skill Acquired]

When I see my HP bar, before I noticed, it has been recovered. Natural healing huh?

I move toward other building from the back alley.
I assigned skill point for [Pain Tolerance], [Lightning Resistance], [Paralyze Resistance], [Shooting] and [Self-Healing] while moving.

I found a 3 story building 100 meters away from the earlier one. I jump over the wall and onto the roof.

Since the soldiers surrounding the demon has decreased to less than half, the methods to attack the demon increased for me.

I take out bow & arrow from the storage and aim at the demon. I have never used a bow until now, but thanks to the sniping and shooting skills earlier, I somehow understand the aim.

"Aim and shoot!"

I take a good aim, the moment when the demon stopped... shoot.

And missed.

The hand which pulled the bowstring hurt.

After that, no matter how many I shoot, none hit. Even though I understand how to shoot the bow, there is no result.

The enclosing soldiers have become considerably sparse.
I discovered a route where I could get close to the demon discreetly, after marking the map I drop down from the roof.

I equipped the scale tribe's spear.
If I knew this would happen I'd have gotten leather armor tailored.

Holding the spear with both hands, I hide in the shadows.

>[Spy Skill Acquired]

Since I got a skill that looks useful, I immediately allocate skill points to it.
There are several overturned big carriages on the way to the demon. I head there.
When I invoke the spy skill, my footsteps disappear. Maybe it's just my imagination.

The demon's roar can be heard and the knights got hit by lightning.
That roar seems to be a spellcasting procedure.

When the demon's attention wanders off, I shorten the distance and thrust the spear from behind!
Stab! With that kind of unpleasant sound, the sensation of tearing real flesh is transferred to my hand.
Me being a chicken, unintentionally separate my hand from the spear.

My hands and legs are trembling.

The demon's tail strikes the unmoving me from a blind spot, sending me flying 3 meters away. I stopped at the carriage wreckages after rolling on the ground.

>[Surprise Attack Skill Acquired]
>[Spear Skill Acquired]
>[Shock Resistance Skill Acquired]

My HP is only reduced by 1 point. However, I don't know whether this is because of excitement or fear from my first close quarter combat, my trembling limbs don't stop.
Fortunately the demon turned his attention to the knights who restarted their assault, I take a deep breath many times.

The trembling subside for a little.

>[Fear Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Reckless Courage Skill Acquired]

I equip a small sword and shield made from bronze in the shadow of the wreckages. I left the sword in the scabbard and put it on my waist belt. Usually one would use metal fixture or special belt to hold it but it can't be helped since I don't have it. Let's buy it later.

I also prepare a small bow with an arrow. It's an arrow with a bone arrowhead. The demon is only a little over 10 meters away but I still don't think I'd hit.

The demon lifted an attacking soldier and threw him at the knights.
I match the timing to his throwing and dash closer. Shooting the arrow at zero distance unnoticed.

>[Bow Skill Acquired]

I discard the bow immediately, and slash the demon the moment I unsheathed the sword.
The small sword broke. To break bronze in one hit...

>[Iai Skill Acquired]
>[One-Handed Sword Skill Acquired]

「▼▼　▼▼▼▼　▼▼▼▼▼▼▼！！」

While cursing with incomprehensible words the demon attacked with poisonous claws.
I promptly decide to receive the attack with the shield but it's also coming from the other side, the judgment come in the spur of the moment, using the broken sword to guard.
Of course, such thing can't defend the attack and breaks in a single blow from the poisonous claw.

>[Demon Language Skill Acquired]
>[Poison Resistance Skill Acquired]

I wanted to immediately enable the poison resistance skill, but there is no leeway to operate the menu in battlefield.
I prevent the poisonous claw coming from the opposite side with the shield, and throw the grip I have in my hand to the demon.

>[Shield Skill Acquired]
>[Throwing Skill Acquired]

While trying to take out a weapon from the shadow of my mantle, I neglected my guard, tumbled by the demon's tail I rolled over.
Furthermore his foot tramples in pursuit.

Fumu! Fumu! Fumu! 3 waves of stomping consecutively come, my body finally breaks away from the loop on the 4th attack.

>[Evasion Skill Acquired]

Kicking the ground with strange posture I take a distance from the demon.
Finally gaining time, I allocated skill points to [Evasion], [Shield], [Poison Resistance], [Shock Resistance] one by one.

Covered by the mantle, I retrieve a dagger and a firewood club from the storage. I slip the dagger on my belt, and hold the club.

Somehow I got the feeling that a look of ridicule is floated on the face of the demon.
I wonder if demon has self-healing ability, his HP is recovering. There is no such skill in his skill column, is it a specific race characteristic?

From the corner of my view I saw the knights readying for the next assault.
I carefully measure the distance while preparing the club.

Ignoring the knights assault, the demon keep his attention here.

I leap and strike the club at the demon's bust. It break when it contact the black body of the demon.
I defend from the demon's poisonous claws with the shield, avoid the tail sweep with minimum movement and jump.
I slash with the dagger. The demon couldn't avoid it but is somehow able to parry with his claws.

>[One-Handed Staff Skill Acquired]
>[Dagger Skill Acquired]
>[Parry Skill Acquired]

The knights begin to run towards us, when they reach the middle of the plaza, I stagger the demon by ramming my shield into it.
<TLN: Now this one is tricky, since subject can be missing in Japanese I'm not sure if it's the knights or Satou who's shield bashing, I'm opting Satou given the next few lines>I jump backward by using the recoil. Leaping over the horses and their riders.

>[Shield Bash Skill Acquired]

The knights attack once then withdraw, then another one does the same, thrusting his lance and withdrawing.

>[Cooperation Skill Acquired]

From the 3 man formation, the last one fails to withdraw due to the demon's tail attack. Both the horse and the man topple over.
I kicked at the demon who tried to finish the knight from the flank!

>[Kicking Skill Acquired]

I picked up a spear with broken tip near my foot fallen from the soldier and put back the dagger in the scabbard. As expected, a dagger's reach is too short so it's easy to parry, it's troublesome.

I elude the demon by using the spear with a broken tip to gain time so that the knights and soldiers who have fallen from their horses can withdraw. While parrying I also strike some part of the demon's feet, sometime hitting the arms carefully as not to make this into unilateral defensive battle.

>[Two-Handed Staff Skill Acquired]

The spear finally broke after becoming a prey of the poisonous claws.

The demon's eyes are shining!
Because I have a bad feeling about that I raised the shield and put my whole body in the shadow of my mantle. It's probably some kind of evil gaze attack. Is it charm, paralyze or petrification?

The mantle and the shields turned into stone!

...I endured it somehow, only the mantle and shield got sacrificed.
It might have been dangerous if I moved a bit later.

>[Petrification Resistance Skill Acquired]

Since nearing the demon might mean getting petrified, before he comes I allocate skill points to [Parry], [Petrification Resistance].

Petrification attacks might not be exclusive to demons alone...

1-10. Let's Dance With the Demon! [Final Part]

"Greetings from the battlefield, the commentator Suzuki Ichirou, will be sent off by me, Satou."

Expect getting even more skills with increasing tension, Satou's here.
While pretending to be dead behind the mantle, I activate many skills but...
I didn't expect for it to cause a situation like that!

Well then, let's start "Let's Dance With the Demon [Final Part]"!

◇

I take out a two-handed sword from the shadow of my mantle.
At the same time, the magicians begin their counterattack, after waiting behind their formation.

Fireball, Firestorm, Wind Blade, Lightning. 3 systematic magics assault the demon one after another, and it also lands on me who is seemingly petrified near the demon.

Furthermore, more attacks come after a bit. Stone Bullet, Sandstorm, Water Ball, Snowstorm.

The last one to arrive is simply a pillar of light piercing through heaven.

>[Fire Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Wind Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Lightning Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Fire Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Wind Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Earth Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Water Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Ice Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Earth Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Water Resistance Skill Acquired]

>[Ice Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Light Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Light Resistance Skill Acquired]

The log flowed at a great speed.

Maybe because of my level the damage isn't much, but unpleasant things are unpleasant.

The demon seems to think the same, and returned lightning magic to the magicians lot.
Probably predicting it, the magicians defended with a barrier before the lightning hit.

Already breaking apart from the magic earlier, I shatter the petrified mantle and shield.

Being a bit away from the demon, I stand up and immediately jump to close the distance. Aiming at the demon's head I swing the two-handed sword. Since the demon tilted his head, the full attack did not connect, but I succeeded in cutting one of his horn.

>[Two-Handed Sword Skill Acquired]
>[Helm Splitter Skill Acquired]
>[Air Battle Skill Acquired]
>[Weapon Destruction Skill Acquired]

The soldiers are looking over here while saying something.
They're probably surprised that someone who just got shot by barrages of magic could calmly fight.

With my disheveled long blond hair swaying on the back and the silver mask reflecting the sunlight, I face the demon.
I thought that a hooded mantle would suffice, but it was a good decision to prepare additional disguises as an insurance.

After receiving that much concentrated fire the demon finally suffered about 20% damage.

I bear the two-handed sword to on my shoulder. I have no problem wielding it, but it's hard to balance my body due to the weight. It's good that I become younger and all, but since my body also became lighter it might be a minus in a battle.

For now, the demon is too close to the magicians' base. If I don't somehow lead it away from the plaza…

I don't want you to misunderstand me, this is not because some sort of heroism of not wanting any victims. The reason is quite selfish; they do damage the demon, however small it is, so it's troubling if they're all annihilated.

The demon attacks during the gap where my thoughts derailed. Dashing on the ground, the poisonous claws rushed towards me!

Even if tried to shake the demon off with the two-handed sword, it boldly closed the distance not letting me get away.

I throw the two-handed sword at the demon to elude the poisonous claws, taking out a hatchet from the mantle and use it to cut the demon.
Because the hatchet stuck deeper than I thought, I left it there and avoided the demon's counter.

>[One-Handed Axe Skill Acquired]

While empty-handed, I'm exchanging blow with the demon while retreating.
Sometimes, I pick up weapons dropped by the soldiers on the ground to add onto the attack. Since I haven't activate physical attack related skills, the damage I'm doing is small.

Should I break the deadlock soon?

Most knights have wounds all over the body, only a few of them are unhurt. There aren't any useless shots from the magicians either, seems that they ran out of magic power.

Seemingly, it's not only me who thinks so, from the castle gate several

horses come out pulling a cannon.

I position myself to divert the demon's attention from the gate until the cannon finished setting up.

When I get near the wreckages I draw the demon's attention, behind the wreckages, I switch my weapon. I put a blacksmith's hammer onto my waist, and wield a two-handed axe and a sledgehammer in each hand.

It's not really practical but thanks to my maxed STR, I can wield it just fine. Maybe because I look ferocious, the demon's expression become unpleasant.

I jump from behind the carriage. First let's strike with the sledgehammer! The demon guarded to the right with both hands but without minding it I slashed from the opposite side with the two-handed axe.
The axe cut through, and the arm fell!

...I remember, from some manga, about an episode of an arm that had been separated from the body attacking independently. Let's pay attention to that arm...

>[Two-Handed Axe Skill Acquired]
>[Two-Handed Hammer Skill Acquired]
>[Dual Wielding Skill Acquired]
>[Herculean Strength Skill Acquired]

Though it's a different story with a surprise attack, after all fighting using a sledgehammer with one hand is difficult, I fight single mindedly with the two-handed axe.
The cannon still isn't prepared yet.

The demon inhale greatly.
Magic!

I close the distance. But, that was a bad move.

The demon let out an acid breath!

Even though I've seen it once! I completely forgot that it has this kind of attack!
I guarded with the axe which immediately broke, the wig and the robe got terribly burnt.
"Ouch, ouch, ouch!"

I go to the nearest cover, throw off the robe behind the bronze statue, and wear a new mantle. I wore commoner clothes underneath the robe yet there's also a large hole in it too.

If the surface area of the axe wasn't big, my face would have burned...

>[Decay Resistance Skill Acquired]
>[Quick Dressing Skill Acquired]

I allocate [Decay Resistance] and [Quick Dressing] with skill points.

I wonder what the variety for skills are, I want a wiki.

Since the axe is no longer usable as a weapon, I throw it away; I try to strike once with the blacksmith hammer from my waist. Since it didn't seem very effective, I put it back when I got the skill.

>[One-Handed Hammer Skill Acquired]
>[Blacksmith Skill Acquired]

I think blacksmithing is quite different to this...

Meanwhile, the cannon installation is complete, but it seems that it will require some time before it could fire.

I pick up the sledgehammer which I discarded earlier.
Of course the demon doesn't let up his attacks, but whether it's because of the avoid skill, or because I'm getting used to fighting, I've reached the point where I have some margins in this fight.

I should end this soon...
I allocate skill points to [One-Handed Sword].

The cannon seems to be ready to fire. Magicians on both side of the cannon begin to to cast spells.

The demon seems to be really worried about the cannon. Its putting up an air.
The demon charges toward the cannon during the gap when I avoided its tail attack!

I discard the heavy sledgehammer, and pick up a sword lying on the way while chasing the demon.

The demon, with agility belying that huge body, jumps over multiple soldiers who block the way.
The light soldier with spears immediately cover but they become prey to the poisonous claw.

But the demon stopped.

Just like the demon, I jump over the soldiers and cut one wing off the demon, then I pierce the sword to its leg and stitch it to the ground. After getting the sword skill, I could understand the principle of swordsmanship.
The demon only has 30% remaining on its HP gauge.
Furthermore, I pull the only remaining arm of the demon to the ground.
I intersect the demon's arm to its leg, and with my free hand pick a spear left by the killed soldiers earlier to use it to crucify the demon on the ground.

>[Fighting Skill Acquired]
>[Capture Skill Acquired]

I look at the a person who looks like a commander besides the cannon who's measuring the timing to shoot the cannon.

I fix the demon with another spear, and nodded there.

The commander swing down his arm, at the same time, I jump off from the line of fire.

The cannon shoots out a buckshot and innumerable wound appear on the

demon's. Moreover, as a final blow, a magic combo like earlier struck.

I wonder if the cannon can’t shoot multiple rounds, it didn't finish the dying demon. The magicians probably don't have enough magic power either, only three people cast spells.

I could end it if I run there with the sword but let's give the honor of ending the demon's life to those guys. Like I said earlier, this is not out of goodwill; even if the opponent is a demon, I don't like killing with my own hand. It's really stupid, but I'm from society unrelated to violence since a long time ago... Even though I eat meat and fish, I shirk on killing.

Putting that aside...

The demon used the tattered hand freed from the stitch to lift up its body from the ground, raised a roar and destroyed the cannon with lightning magic. Is there no one who could use a barrier anymore?!

Then the slightly late magicians use magic to shave the little of the demon's strength (HP).
Furthermore, the knights get off their horses and sidle up to the demon with their long swords ready.

...It'll end after the encircling completely, huh. Amen~

The end can already be seen, but the demon hasn't given up yet.

The hand which has been restrained by the knights is thrust into its own chest, pulling out a dark red heart. The pulled heart is fast begin to pulse harder. Matching the violent movement, light overflow.

The knights hurriedly try to destroy the heart, but they don't make it in time.

With loud bursting sound, the heart breaks apart!

When the light subsided, several magicians who set up barriers have become corpses in a heap. Only the lower half remaining of the demon's dead body. The ground is gouged in a fan shaped form following the

demon's direction toward the castle gate, the gate itself has been partially destroyed.

The demon's corpse falls apart and becomes black dust.

I slip into the alley during the clamor and hide myself.

>Title [Combat-Ready] Acquired
>Title [Skilled Warrior] Acquired
>Title [One Who Dances With Demons] Acquired
>Title [Hero] Acquired

...I wonder if the last one is sarcasm.

Death March

- Volume 2 -

2-1. Disaster Relief and the Shrine Maiden

Satou's here. Feeling like a veteran warrior, but after all I'm just an average citizen, Satou.

Although it's hard to call this a victory, for once, the battle is over.
Hereafter is the battle of lifesaving and rebuilding.

It's about time for a harem candidate to appear, right?

◇

I take off the robe and mantle in a desolate back-alley. Overlapping with all map exploration magic to check for human sign, I also took off my disguise.

Well it's just a wig and a mask though...

I put the disguise set and the robe in the forbidden folder inside the storage.
Which robe should I use now?

I take out a uselessly gaudy robe.
This one should be okay.

I decide to return to the street after changing to the gaudy robe. Of course, using a different route.

There's a soldier's corpse stuck on the tree branch along the way. To be flown to this place.... I join my hands to pray for it.

For now let's return to the plaza after performing an obligatory prayer.

"Err... The gaudy person over there~."

...Somehow there's a voice coming down from the tree.

Confirming on the radar, the corpse earlier isn't a corpse at all, somehow

it's quite alive.
I look up.

"I'm sorry, could you call some soldiers? It's okay to do it after the battle in the plaza is over."

The first impression is quite favorable due to the absence of "help me". However even though the soldier is caught in the tree's branches... The hands and feet aren't turned toward strange directions.

Now then, is there any scaffolding to help the soldier?
...Guess I'll just kick that window and land on the other branch.

I fly to branch near the soldier. In consideration for possible fracture, I land while trying not to shake the branch.

"Well then, I'll carry you down so please don't move."
"Eh, how did you get here? Please don't push yourself and just call the other soldiers!"

I silently carry the soldier in my arms.
If the soldier has fractured bones then landing on the ground could be dangerous... Since there are at least 4 meter until the ground.
Thus, I jump to the slightly higher roof next to the branch.

"Though I jumped while taking care not to jolt you as much as possible, are you all right?"
"Yes, that surprised me but I'm fine."

I move from roof to roof in search of a house with an exit from atop the roof.
There is a lot of unaired laundry, it probably got left behind after the demon came.

After checking for people on the radar, I get out of the house to the alleyway.
I carry the soldier in princess hug to the plaza.

"Hey, I have a little question..."
"Yes, what is it?"

"Even if you were blown away by the demon, isn't it too far?"

This isn't a gag manga. From the plaza to here is more than 10 meter apart.

"I got blown away by the attack of that demon, since I would have died at that rate, I used magic to decelerate my falling speed. Although I was already running out of magic power. I was at loss when I got caught on that branch."

Magic seems to be usable even if one isn't a magician...

There is a temporary relief station in the plaza.
A bit away from the relief station, mats are placed and several 'people' are lined up there... It's not for the injured but for corpses huh...

"People who were rescued from the wreckages, please gather over here."

A woman in white coat shout for injured people to assemble over there, so I head there.

"For people who are holding the patient, please keep a little distance away from their body."

So she says, I stretch my arm to make a gap on my chest.

"I will cleanse the dirts, it may be surprising, so please don't drop them."

"■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■ Soft Wash."

I got drenched along with the soldier. Certainly the dust and the blood (from the soldier who died first earlier) on the robe are gone.

>[Life Magic Acquired]

It's certainly a very useful magic. If there is this kind of magic then I wonder if bathing isn't needed?

"I will dry it immediately."

"■■■　■■■■■ Dry."

"It's complete. Well then, please wait inside the circle drawn with chalks over there. That's the place where we gather injured people."

The white coat head toward the next person.
This is the first time I heard magic chant in close proximity but rather than word, I heard irregular sound instead. I guess it feels like the musical notes from a DTM software?

Though it's not life-threatening the people who have broken bones are gathered there. It's full right after we got in. I don't have any injury, I'm here in order to learn new skills.

Two girls with priestess-like clothes and kind atmospheres quietly approach, each accompanied with their attendants.

"Now the Parion shrine maiden will grant you their miracle. Everyone, please be silent."
The attendant with big build shouted so to the injured peoples. And out of nowhere, the attendant with small build tells the tense people, "Please relax your body～".

After the injured people calmed down, the shrine maiden begin the magic chant.

「■■■■■　■■■■　■■■」
「■■■■　■■■■　■■■　■■■」
(Omitted... It's too long, priestess-san.)
「■■■■■　■■■■　■■■ Area Heal.」

>Holy Magic: Parion Belief Acquired

Most people seems to be healed by the magic just now.
The two attendants go around to give additional healing for people who need them.

The big attendant said, "Since it's a bone fracture, please rest quietly later", while giving first aid to the soldier I carried.

Oh yes, this isn't a BL okay? Even though the soldier is still physically growing, she is an actual woman.

◇

Now then, I've learned various magic but I don't know their chant, there are magic shop and bookstore that sell magic books in the plaza, but the stores were destroyed so they're probably closed now...

"The good you do for others is the good you do for yourself."
<TLN: A Japanese idiom>

Let's make myself popular with the bookstore and the magic shop by helping them with selfish reasons in mind.

A carriage is half buried under the magic shop.
After confirming that there are no survivor near the carriage, I pull it out.
...When I think about it, I'm standing out by doing this, aren't I?

There's a corpse in terrible condition stuck on the carriage, nausea is swelling up inside me... I'm weak with gore so please pardon me.

The inside of the magic shop has been destroyed but it seems that the people inside are fine because of a back door. Since I see people's figure on the radar beyond the back door, thinking that they're fine I head toward the bookstore.

The front wall of the bookstore is destroyed, it looks like it'll collapse any minute now. When I peek inside, numerous bookshelves have been toppled and books are scattered around.
From the map, it seems that there are two people squashed under the bookshelves.

The bookshelves is lined up edge to edge, thanks to them being made with dense ebony, they're very heavy.
I raise the bookshelves ⇒ I cram the book between the shelves ⇒ Whenever I raise a bookshelf the leftovers books get in the way and then I can't raise the next bookshelf so the work take quite some time. Also partly because

I'm afraid that the shelf will break if I try to forcefully raise it.
1 hour after the work begin, I finally able to rescue a person.

It's a boy of around 10 years old. He's unconscious but he's breathing. The HP is about half, I stop working and bring him to the relief station. I didn't forget to tell them that the boy was rescued from the bookstore.

It's not the priestess from earlier, but a person that looks like a magician who heals people with water magic. Huh, healing magic can be done with many elements.
There are more priests now but they all dress differently, I wonder if there are different sects.

Now then let's stop procrastinating and get back to work. Because the one left who need rescuing is certainly the storekeeper!

I continue the mundane work of raising the bookshelves and stowing away the books, until finally I was able to help the old man storekeeper buried in the books.
He didn't get crushed under the bookshelves but he seemed to be squashed by the fallen books, his HP is quite low. He's conscious though.

"Thank you very much for helping me."

It's an austere voice quite fit to be a seiyuu. What a romantic gray haired old man, he must've been quite popular back in the day.
Outside the store, the old woman and the daughter have come back. It seems that they went shopping to the west gate which was closed until just now.

I carry the old man to the relief station. The old woman also follows. The daughter remains in the store to clean things up.

In the relief station, the injured people who have come have increased even more. As expected the healer can't catch up. The two healer priestess attendants from earlier run out of MP and are sitting on the couch.

I search through the storage... there.
I take out 3 MP recovery medicine from my pocket and give it to the two

attendants. It's a service for the skill I got earlier.
At first the big attendant was suspicious but after he knew that it was MP recovery medicine he thanked me.
...but, please stop drinking it in one gulp while having one hand in hip. You look like an old man.
The priestess is silent with a pale face looking down. I wonder if she's tired from using too much magic.

I leave the storekeepers to the relief station and head back to the store to help with the clean up.

I had forgotten the important matter.

The daughter of the bookstore. Her name is Semone-san. She's actually the granddaughter, and big-breasted! It's hidden by the clothes, but it's unmistakably E cup! With a long blond hair and a pair of blue eyes, she's about the same age as Nadi-san!

I'm correcting the bookshelf positioning while having a calm idle talk with her, I'm enjoying the work while placing the books which lost their binding in a box.
I love organizing books~

I mark all the interesting book during the placements.
Arrow marks can be seen in plenty through AR.

When the day is about to become dark the storekeepers come back.
I politely refuse the invitation for dinner, I purchase 3 books that catch my attention and go home. They wanted to give it as a thanks, but I compromise with just having slight discounts.

"Royal Capital Tourist Guide","Introductory Book for Life Magic", and "Life Magic Book" which should be 2 gold coin and 3 silver coin become 2 gold coin with the discount.

...Unfortunately, the bookstore daughter is married. The husband is a magician...

>Title [One Who Prays for the Dead] Acquired

>Title [Rescuer] Acquired
>Title [One Who Protects Books] Acquired

2-2. Let's Learn Life Magic!

Satou's here, even though there are many encounter, too bad that it immediately end, Satou.
Is it the face! It's the face isn't it!

◇

Because there were various things happening yesterday, I was fast asleep right after dinner.

Today is a reading day!
...Is what I thought, but the room is dark. There is a window for light to get through but it's still not enough to make books readable, it's too dim.

If I'm not mistaken there's an open terrace cafe neighboring this inn.
Let's eat a breakfast special on the coffee shop. I dunno if it exist but...

The tavern in first floor of the inn is crowded with people who are taking breakfast. It seems that the customers has increased a bit compared to yesterday.
I give the key to the landlady since I'm going out. Martha-chan happily greets me when I come out of the inn. This old man is dazzled by your morning radiance.

The gate also looks remarkably busier than the day before yesterday. Lots of big carriage are going in and out pulled by peasant-looking people. Do they not use cows or horses to pull it?

I immediately find the coffee shop when I look around outside. It's slightly farther away than what I remember.

It seems that the coffee shop use the indoor for meal while the open terrace is for tea time. When I naturally ask the waitress, it doesn't seem that it's the owner's decision to do that. Because the inside of the shop is a bit dark, I

secure a seat on the open terrace for easy reading.

For breakfast, I order a fruit and sandwiches. The sandwich has ham, vegetables and cheese sandwiched between the malt bread. The fruit juice is similar with Citrus. It tastes a bit richer than orange. The cup isn't made of glass but copper but since it's cold, it's still quite delicious. I wonder if it's cooled using life magic? My motivation to learn the magic increases~ ♪

Oh, yeah, there are 3 waitresses. A 20 year old plump red head, a 16 year old slender chestnut-colored hair with an impressive teardrop mole, and the last one is a girl who looks younger than 12 with a long black hair.

Everyone is working cheerfully.

While enjoying these sights, I read the introductory book for life magic.

Life magic is a magic not classified in any of the four main element of magic, it's a collection of magic useful for daily life. It's a magic incomparably weak compared to the elemental one. In exchange the required magic power is not much, at the level where people who can't use attack magic can use it. Nevertheless, even with so many convenient spells, most magicians look down upon life magic. They call magicians who can only use life magic, spell-users, and rather than as magicians, these people are treated as town handymen. Because of this prejudice there are only a few magicians who learn life magic. There are even lamentations regarding this written in the book.

"Good morning, Satou-san!"

I was greeted from outside the terrace. It's Nadi-san.
I thought that she's still in shock from yesterday's event but she looks surprisingly energetic. She's strong even for an energetic archetype!

"Good morning. How is your condition, Nadi-san?"
"Thank you very much for your help yesterday. Not only did you help me get away from a dangerous location, you even sent me with a horse carriage."
"It's fine, it wasn't much."

Since she's here, I offered her a chair.

"Is that a book on life magic?"
"Yes, I bought it yesterday hoping to at least be able to use the basics."
Since my life magic skill is level 10, the only thing remaining is the chants though.

"For life magic, I recommend to practice Water Spring or Dry, depending on your main element. Most books usually recommend Ignition but if you cause fire in the town, it could be dangerous."

Certainly, it's just as she said.

"If it's Water Spring then you can store the water in a bucket, but please don't use the metal cup beside you since it's easy to scratch."

Do I draw the water from vapor?

"If it's Dry then you can practice using wet clothes placed on a hanger."

It's quite a scientific talk. Even though it's fantasy.

"That's right, Does Satou-san not use a cane? You can't use magic if you don't equip a cane."

What! There's such restriction.
Come to think of it, the magicians from before did have it, the life magic user was also using a cane.
Wait, how about that soldier? And the priestess didn't have one too.

"Do you mean Parion priestess? If so then they have holy mark in place of a cane. The soldier probably had other kind invocation tools or maybe a backup short cane?"
"Nadi-san, what is invocation tool? Is it different from a cane?"

"Invocation tool is something like ring or the likes of accessory, functioning like a cane, it's an item used to assist the activation of magic. The effect is lower than a cane, but it's expensive so there are few magicians who have one. Although for a job like magic swordsman where it's not possible to use

a cane then it's a necessity."

As expected of the live Wiki. The one woman encyclopedia, Nadi-san.

Cane huh... There are various type of magic wand in the Storage. But the effect is too strong, it's scary. If possible, I'd like to practice with cheap things first.
But the magic shops in the town center won't be in operation for a while, I wonder where I could get one?

"Nadi-san, Do you know anywhere I can buy a short cane?"
"Then the magic shop in the central... But as expected, it's closed because of yesterday, right? I think you can buy one from the alchemy shop in the west town."

I make a note of the way to the alchemist shop from Nadi-san.
Then after telling me the important points to note in the west area, Nadi-san went back to her work.

Now that it's lunch time in the open terrace, the customers have increased.

◇

I finished reading the introductory book just as I finished eating pasta for lunch.
...Why is this fantasy town very peculiar about taste!

10 minutes after I've entered the western area, the content of the dummy purse I've hanged on my waist is gone. The bottom of the purse is cut and the content is no more, though there were only pennies inside.

From looking at the log, it was not a pickpocket. It's really a game-like function.

I've passed through the area where they're selling daily necessities, and suspicious looking shops began to increase in number. Sexy women and evil looking old men can be seen wandering around.

There's a square in the center of the west area. The alchemy shop is further

ahead.
Street stalls are lined up in the square, selling birds, cattle and the like competing with each other.

On the entrance of the square, a merchant is announcing something about slave market. It seems that it'll be open for 3 days from tomorrow night.

When I look at it carefully there are boys and girls with slave collars on their neck standing in line with cattle. Half of them seems to be hurt. Every one of those slaves have dead eyes. The cattle look healthier than them.
I had the urge to buy them all, but it's only for self-satisfaction so I stopped. It's not the end even after they're released after all. ...Isn't this just an excuse?

Coming out of the square, brothels lined the streetside. I subtly feel like this is a period drama.
Still, lewd professional older woman are the best, right? Rather than an unwilling slave, a pro well versed in sexual culture is better.
Tonight, let's go to a shop with beautiful older women! I wonder if there are cabaret? I'd love to have a lewd conversation over a bubble bath but...

The main topic has been grandly derailed.
The alchemy shop seems to be located in the middle of this brothel street. There's probably a high demand for drugs~

I wonder if it's thanks to Nadi-san's advice of only walking on the center of the road, I've arrived at the alchemy shop without being dragged to an alleyway. No wait, there was that pickpocket so it wasn't entirely safe...

"Good afternoon. Are you open for business?"

There's a dwarf on the counter inside the shop. Let me say this, it's not cute at all. It's a small old man about 1 meter tall. Is he a gnome? Or a hobbit? The AR indicate that he's of a fairy race. When I look better the "Earth Fairy (Gnome)" indication come up.

"If you're window-shopping, Go away."

Aw, how cold.

...This isn't a pun okay?
<TLN: Not sure where's the pun, my moonrune isn't advanced enough for this, I guess it's the 冷?>

"I'd like to buy a short cane, do you have any in stock?"

"Spell-user eh? There are cheap, expensive, and really expensive one, which one do you want?"

So rough~

"Please show me the cheap and the expensive one."

The shopkeeper take a wooden and a copper short canes out. The short canes look like something a certain famous British boy had, it's a simple wand. If you don't understand, then please imagine an orchestra conductor's baton but a bit thicker.
I stare at each of the canes and their performances are displayed on the AR. The wooden one has [Magic Activation Support + 3][Magic Effect Expansion -2], and 2 big copper coins market price, then the copper one beside it has [Magic Activation Support +3],[Magic Focus Support + 2],[Magic Effect Expansion +2], with 3 silver coins quoted as the market price.
To be frank, even if I can see the performance I don't understand where the difference is.

The copper cane seems to have better performance, but the wooden one looks something that a magician would have, so I buy that one.

The shopkeeper looks displeased since I choose the cheaper one.

I might as well buy some medicines here.
That's right, if you're talking about alchemy then it's potion.

"Are there manual and tools for compounding?"

The shopkeeper grins while laughing. He probably think that I'm an easy mark.

[Introductory Book for Medicine Compounding, Practical Writing],[Book of

Poison and Antidote][Book of Illness and Treatment], 5 compound tools set with extravagance cases, medicinal plant harvesting set tools, and chemical mixtures for beginner set. "These are all!" So he said after piling them all up.

...Hmm? Am I being tested?
The magic imbuing tools have a [Magic Imbuing Type Fake] status. The others are genuine.

"Is there no other one for this magic imbuing tool? It's not to my liking."

I openly point out the fake. It's how an adult interact.

"Fumu, it's a tool used to nitpick amateur who doesn't understand a thing."

He somehow looks happy. It's not only reflected on his face but the atmosphere has also softened a bit.

This time he takes out 3 imbuing tools.

One is decorated with high-class looking ornament, another is a tool that looks like it has been used a lot, and the last one is a cheap-looking and obviously fake tool. The high class one is especially equipped with magic, when I hold it up and move my hand, it emit a weak green light. It goes without saying that the expensive one is a fake.

"Then, I choose this one."

Of course I picked the well used one.

The market price is 15 gold coins eh. At any rate, does a beginner spell-user who comes to buy a cheap short cane look like someone who has money?

"I see, so you choose that one... If you have this one, then you won't need another, beside raw materials, even after you've become a veteran alchemist.

"How much is it?"

"10 gold coins."

Eh, isn't it much cheaper than the market price?
The shopkeeper grins when he see my face.

"Just as I thought, you have the appraisal skill."

The shopkeeper looks proud with his guess. I don't have such a skill.

>[Appraisal Skill Acquired]

Let's not argue back...

"Is it really okay with 10 gold coins?"
"Yeah, I'm saved if someone as capable as you studies alchemy."

When I think about it, isn't this thanks to haggling skill?

I pay the price and receive the books among other things. As one expect, my bag doesn't fit.
I decided to return to the hotel while holding the books in both hands.
I leave the shop after thanking the shopkeeper.

The things I need to do increase again.
I will learn alchemy after I've learned life magic!

2-3. The Chant, the Soldier and the Noisy Afternoon

Satou's here. Waving the short cane, rather than a magician I feel like a conductor.

Conductor skill doesn't appear. I'm a bit disappointed Satou.

The harem flag seems to be still so far away.

◇

After I returned to the hotel, I put away the alchemy sets.

I wanted to put it inside the <<Thirty Holding Bag>>, but from what I've heard from Nadi-san during the tour, the item was popular for the wealthy back in the era of the ancestor king Yamato, however, nowadays it's only attainable for the army, higher-ranking nobles, or a very prosperous merchant.

Since it's like that, I can't use it casually. It's not a problem if some thieves caught their eyes on it, but if it was a noble then it could become impossible to continue touring this city.

Following the instruction from Nadi-san yesterday, I fill a bucket full of water from the Hell Water Jug. I dip a cloth to the water and squeeze it. I take out a pot I bought yesterday and put the cloth there.

All right, preparation complete!

It's time for the chant for Dry!

"Lu lula la li lu... la?"

Even though I can read the word, I can't pronounce it! Do I need to read 100

character in one minute fast?

What kind of impossible game is this?

Then, I continued to practice chanting while feeling discouraged but I wasn't able to in the end. Cloth will get dry even if I don't use magic but I'm not happy about this at all.

"Okay! Let's ask for some help!!"

I get up clenching my hand!
When in trouble it's Nadi-san! Let's ask for some advices from Nadi-san.

"Nadiemo~n, please help me~."

Even while feeling like clinging to a straw, I'm heading to the Worker's Guild.

...But unfortunately, Nadi-san is absent.

◇

Since Nadi-san doesn't come back even until evening, I'm going to the bookstore in the central district. There should be other books about Life magic beside the ones I bought.

On the way there, I was called to the clothing store. Apparently, my order has been completed early.

I wonder if the shopkeeper remember when I said that I didn't have change of clothes, so he hurried the order.

Let's receive it after that much trouble.

"It really suits you well."
"Yes, you look like a heir of a big company or a noble."

The shopkeeper and his wife praise me highly.

To confirm the size I take a pose in front of a full-length floor mirror. However isn't this better than the sample back then? No, it's not a self-praise.

"Indeed, and it's better than the sample."
"That's right! Since it's a rush order, I asked a different tailor than the usual, but this fine lines and sewing are well done, truly splendid! Really~ thanks to the customer, I found a nice tailor."

How do I say it, I feel like apologizing.
After this much, let's just wrap my cloth earlier and wear this new one now.

◇

When I get to the gate I was asked to present the ID card. According to the gate soldier, it seems that some thieves got in after the disturbance, so it's now required to present your identification.

In the plaza, most stores along the main road are open. Because most of the fight happened in front of the castle gate, beside few unlucky shops most are unscathed.

I bought tea leaves in a specialist shop facing the plaza shown by Nadi-san yesterday, I also bought some spices from a spice shop.

On the luxury food store I bought rice, miso, soy sauce. Like I said, why is this fantasy-(abbreviated)?

In front of a tavern in the plaza, a bard is singing a poem about the yesterday's demon and the knights with a full sense of reality.

...Isn't the mysterious silver mask a bastard child of the earl? Such songs are sung. The mask was actually tin but it has been promoted to silver.

Since I relatively enjoyed it, I gave him a silver coin. ...I was a bit ashamed though!

How many detours could it be just to go to a bookstore.

◇

"Satou-san, thank you very much for yesterday!"

Semone-san greets me with smile inside the bookstore. Apparently, today is her turn to look after the store.

"Hello Semone-san. How is the old man's condition?"

"Yes, he was healed with magic, but since he's of age, my grandmother is watching after him to rest for 2-3 days."

Old man, you've got a good grandchild, I'm envious.

I'm gossiping some miscellaneous things to cushion for the real talk.

"You're searching for books regarding the way to practice chanting of life magic?"

"Yes, I was able to understand the explanation on the book I bought before, but I'm struggling to actually chant it..."

"Umm, Satou-san, Life magic skill is relatively easy to remember, but normally you'd need 3-5 years of training to master it. Moreover, even with that much training, 80% people usually end up in failure."

But I got the skill after receiving the life magic once? It's a cheat after all...

"Umm, even if you already have Life magic skill from the beginning, people who can remember the chants are..."

Let's hear it since I have nothing to lose anyway.

"A person who has a gift? Right, There are people who come from long heritage of magician family having magic skill right from birth, but a person like that usually has family members who can use magic..."

There is no need to learn from textbooks... is what she wanted to say, eh.

It can't be helped, I'm just gonna buy vocal training and acting related books.
Let's start improving my flow of speech.

◇

The magic shop facing the main street is covered with something that looks like a tarpaulin. It's closed just as I thought.

"Hello, nimble onii-san."

Turning my head, there, a girl wearing a plain yet elegant one piece tilts her body forward while looking at me with upturned eyes. With a slender body and long straight bob hair, she's a charmingly beautiful girl.

"Hello soldier-san, you're wearing a lovely dress today."

>[Lip Service Skill Acquired]

Please don't interrupt my talk...

"Ehehe~, since we seldom have rest, there aren't many chances to wear this~"

"About yesterday, have your bone fractures healed?"

"Yes! I want to say that, but the place where it break still occasionally hurt so I thought of going to the temple."

Just to make sure, she's the soldier I saved from a tree yesterday.

"Can you not heal yourself?"

"There is no healing method in wind magic you know."

I see, each element has their own forte.

"Ah~ Zena is boy hunting~~!!"
"Oh, it's true, Putting aside the face, he's well dressed, furthermore, he's younger! You're good, Zena."

"You girls, please don't make fun of her. Even though she's a late bloomer, that girl works hard, let's just watch over her warmly."

I wonder if they're soldier-san's friend, some noisy girls are standing in front of a shop's entrance while whispering to each other closely. There's a subtle insult mixed in oi.
Soldier-san's name is Zena eh, it's a good nutritious sounding name.

Zena-san is opening and closing her mouth silently with a red face. This kind of reaction is cute~

"Y, you're mistaken. I'm just thanking him for saving me yesterday."

The three girls harden a bit after hearing that.

"By saving you, don't tell me!!"
"That silver masked hero-sama?!"
"It can't be! He was brandishing a sledgehammer and a two-handed axe together you know? This delicate looking boy can't possibly do that."

"No… that's not it."
Zena-san's word doesn't reach the three girls.

"But isn't his height match?"
"Isn't the color of the hair different? That gentleman was blond."
"And he's not using a mask."

"Mou, please hear me!"
Zena-san shouts with her whole body!
The three girls finally pay her an attention.

"This man carried me who wasn't able to move due to injury to the relief station yesterday!"

"Ah, you mean that kind of [[helped me]]."

"But then, that's a golden opportunity in a way!"
"Don't liken her with you, Zena doesn't have such resourcefulness in her."

Yep, it's noisy. This is for Zena-san to meddle with. The three of them feel like they're cheering for her with no malice or sarcasm, they probably cherish her.
I wonder if it's a good time to interrupt them.

"Pleased to meet you, I'm Satou, a peddler. I'm planning to stay in this city for a while, pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Onii-san, you're really not Zena-cchi's boyfriend?"

"I just met her yesterday. Furthermore, I only knew her name after everyone here called her such."

"But but, for Zena to wear a skirt and go on a date!"
"It is not a date." (Zena) <TLN: Since there are sometimes nuance's words impossible to translate in English to indicate who the speaker is in Japanese, I'm just going to do this every time I feel it's ambiguous. Although it's not actually needed here because of the paragraph below.>
"But you never wore a skirt, even on holidays before."

Zena-san and the three girls who looks like the same age as her are lively exchanging words.

"I'd love for you to go on a date with Zena-san. This girl, even with her age, never takes a walk with an opposite sex, let alone a boyfriend."
"Yep, even if she's a fallen noble with no gold or status, she's a good girl. She's flat-chested but she's an adept wind user with promising future as a soldier."

The remaining two also recommend Zena-san.
I like her personality. In five years, after she becomes a bit well-rounded, I'd like to make an advance~
Zena-san stop her quarrel and goes back here.

"We're not fallen!! My little brother properly inherited the rank. Although it's true that we don't have gold or status in government..."

So Zena-san is a lower noble.
...She didn't object about the flat-chest.

"Let's stop playing around with Zena-san and go back to the castle. If we're late for the shift, the commander's special training awaits."
"La~ter~ then, Zena-cchi. Let's hear about various things thoroughly later~"
"Zena, push through with sex appeal and defenselessness! Show your guts!"

The three girls reluctantly return to the castle.
Zena-san is relieved while looking a bit ashamed.

Hmm? One girl went back here in a trot and gave Zena-san something.
Zena-san initially has a blank look, but after she understand what the handed over thing is, her face turn bright red. Probably expecting this reaction, the girl is going back to her friends while saying "Good luck~".

Zena-san secretly puts the thing she got in her pocket, and I don't intend to pursue it.
Because I'm an adult, yep.

2-4. The Afternoon Date with Soldier-san

Satou's here. Rather than a hero, I want to be a magician.

Chanting (aka DTM), such impossible game broke my heart.

I was healed a bit after the girl's talk with Zena-san and her friends.

◇

"I'm sorry for all the fuss. They're not bad girls, it's just that it was unusual that I'm with a man..."

She's coming with upturned eyes. It doesn't feel mischievous like in the beginning, this time it really looks timid.

"They look like fun people. I don't particularly dislike it."

"I'm happy if you think that way. That remind me, you looked troubled in front of the magic shop earlier, is something the matter?"

"Yes, I hit a roadblock in my magic chanting training. I was wondering if they have books concerning chanting practices, but as you see they're closed."

"Satou-san, you're, ummm is it fine to call you Satou-san?"

"Of course it's' fine."
I'm already calling you Zena-san without permission.

"Is Satou-san not only a nimble peddler but also a magician in training? That remind me, today you're not wearing gaudy clothes~, I think this one match you better."
So fixated on nimble part, this person is.

"I want to be able to use Life magic so I'm training on it, but I just can't get the chanting part right..."

"Let's see, for wind magic, people usually start with ■■■■ but if they tries to forcefully chant it, it usually come out like, lyu~lia la~lule li la~o. If it's just memorization, then most people can do it."

Zena-san is tilting her head with "I wonder how I should explain this"-look on her face.

"Rhythm. Yes, please try to slowly recite the chanting and remember the rhythm. Then while keeping the rhythm gradually increase the chanting speed so it become ■■■■!"

I see~, however, even if what she said isn't exactly a secret, isn't it still something that shouldn't be easily taught to other people?

"Rhythm huh... I understand, thank you very much professor. I'll practice hard in that direction."

"Yes, I'm happy that I can help you."

Zena-san smiles.
I should give her something as thanks.

◇

I've decided to go together with Zena-san halfway to the Parion temple in the west district.

"Speaking of which, how long did Zena-san practice to be able to use wind magic?"

"The real training was 3 years, but in hindsight, I've done various things during everyday life in preparation to become a magician~"
I wonder what kind of things? ...I hope it's nothing serious.

"In order to learn the history of magicians, from when I was a child, I was made to read aloud picture books for children, poem singing, practice to read lines smoothly, abdominal breathing... Toys for detecting the flow of magic. Even the children's plays were for the sake of training to become a magician."

Zena-san looks a bit gloomy for a second.

"It's not like I bear ill will toward my parents for raising me like that you know? Learning magic is fun anyway, and I have an objective to fly in the sky someday."

But there is no other road to choose from the beginning...

"Satou-san. Why does Satou-san want to learn life magic? Is it because it's useful for business?"

"No, since there is no bath in the inn, I was thinking if I have magic then I wouldn't have to take a bath outside..."

Ah, she's amazed.
She looks me in the eyes directly, and bursts a laughter.
Is it that interesting?

"Ahahahaha! Th, this is the first time I've seen a person who has such reason for wanting to become a magician."

Seemingly hitting the spot, Zena-san's laughter doesn't stop.

"Is it that strange?"

I think that it's relatively proper reason though. Don't you want to make inconvenient thing easier?

"It is strange!"

An immediate answer.
"Because if you have the drive and the fund to learn life magic, isn't it faster to just build a bath in your house? And you can just buy slaves for the job of

boiling the bath."

It's like that huh~
I will do things I could do myself! I'd like to think like that, but even over here, it's normal to hire people to work, since the labor costs seems to be cheap.

◇

"Mister, please buy some flowers."

When we got to the west street, a little girl carrying a small knitted bag filled with flowers immediately stops us.
The little girl stops while holding out a flower. I've catch sights on her various time before but this is the first time she calls out to me.
I wonder if people accompanied by woman are easier sells?
She's well thought out even though she's just a little girl.

"Okay, how much is it?"
"A penny for a bundle."

I receive the flowers in exchange for a penny. The little girl happily thank me and go toward the next customer candidate.
I present the flower to Zena-san.
Zena-san looks surprised.
No well, there is no other choice than this isn't it?

"Umm, is it fine to take it?"
"Yes, I'd be troubled if you don't receive it."

Since I can't throw it away.
Zena-san bites her lip while looking very happy.
Huh? Is it something to be so happy about?

...Well, I guess it's fine as long as she's pleased.

"That's right, Satou-san. Do you have any business after this?"

"No, after chanting practice I have noting in particular "

...There's alchemy, but I can do that anytime.

"Th, then, why don't we go to the street stalls on the way to the temple?"
"Yes, I'm fine with that. If possible, I'd like you to tell me the specialties of this town."

Zena-san probably never had experience of inviting someone herself, her face turns bright red halfway during the suggestion. Since it's just me, you don't have to be so tense you're fumbling words.
That remind me, when was it decided for me to go along until the temple? She did me a favor regarding the secret of chanting, and I shouldn't complain since it's a date with a girl.

"Specialties is it? Leave it to me!"

She's full of confidence. I could expect something, maybe.

◇

"This is made from sweet potatoes, steamed sweet potatoes are filtered to become jams which then kneaded together to make breads. It's a Seryuu city's specialty from long ago."

Something that looks like sweet potato kneaded for bread huh. Quite a subtle presence...

"These are deep fried bat wings spread with black miso."

It seems that Zena-san doesn't know the cuisine's name either. The shopkeeper who couldn't stand shutting his mouth any longer tells us. ...It's Dragon Wing Fries.
It seems to be foods said to bring luck.
"And then these are things I'm taught by Lilio. Ah, Lilio is the smallest girl from the trio earlier."

Putting aside the girl's name.
The thing that Zena-san recommends is ...light brown? ...I wonder what is it?

For the time being I bought two serving for two pennies from the stall's uncle seller.
I guzzle the brown liquid using the straw plugged into it handed by the uncle seller.
It's a starch syrup!

"Starch syrup huh. It's nostalgic~"
"You knew about it~"

She looks a bit disappointed. I should have been surprised ...I'm sorry.

"The starch syrup that I know is colorless and transparent, I didn't know what this was."
"Noble-sama, the colorless transparent syrups are high-class items made using expensive grains and sugars, this one is intended for commoners and uses sweet potatoes, gabo fruits and malts so it's light brown."

The uncle seller interrupted with overreaction.
Who's a noble? He didn't say it to Zena-san only.

"Mister, I am commoner you know. I got to drink the colorless and transparent syrup from an acquaintance long ago. I didn't know that it's a luxury."

I mean, it's 200 yen a pop on the festival.

Afterwards, we enjoy ourselves by going around various stalls while plodding the crowds. It's a good afternoon.

2-5. The Temple, the Beastkin Girls and the Stone Throwing Afternoon

Satou's here. "Every cloud has a silver lining", I'm contemplating such phrase.

The peaceful afternoon I enjoyed yesterday completely changed.

Well then, the afternoon series, troubles arc will begin...

◇

A little distance away from the street stalls, there's a Parion temple.
In the east street, there are only street stalls in the main street.

There are some people gathered in front of the temple.

"I wonder what happen?"
"Let's check it for a bit."

Zena-san rushes over there. Seeing this quick change of pace, she's really a soldier.

Zena-san asks what happen to the the big priestess' attendant from yesterday.
Zena-san is flapping her hand it around. She seems to be grateful about something.

I wonder what they're talking about?

When I got closer as I walked I only heard the latter half of the story.
By the way, the conversation that I've heard,

"...then how about the Garleon temple on the east street. The temple there also has military contact so medical treatment shouldn't be a problem. It's on east street but you're accompanied by a man so strange fellows probably won't approach you."
"Yes, even like this, I'm a magician soldier. I'd beat playboys who try to pick me up no matter how many of them come."

From Zena-san, it seem that the priestess are in the middle of meeting with envoys from the royal capital temple. Moreover, since the priestess are only able to use magic for healing injury, light poison and illness, we're forced to go to the other referred temple.

...He's just passing the buck!!

◇

In the end, we're going to the Garleon temple on the east street.

It's not like I'm dissatisfied you know?
Even if I got used to it, walking the European-style city together with a plainly cute girl like this, it's quite enjoyable!

Along the way, about 100 meter away, a public park is there.

I thought that it was just a lawn with weeds, but it's cut short and in the square, some old couples carrying baby are resting, and around 10 young people are practicing martial arts.

"Zena-san, what kind of training is in military?"

I want to hear it somehow.

"That's right~, I think it's the same training as soldiers everywhere, but for magic soldiers it's concerning preservation of magic power. We take care to maintain the state where we can use magic at its best."

Variation in training huh?
Certainly, MP-less magicians are useless.

"Magic soldiers and magicians each assigned different roles in accordance with their element. I can only speak from the viewpoint of military, but except for fire element, we don't usually use other elements for attacking."

Certainly something like torturing by fire is certainly suitable for attack. But you can also use it to heat bath you know?

"As for my wind, it's used for protection from arrows, <<Wind Protection>>, defending a castle from castlebreaker hammer with (Air Cushion), or transmitting instruction with (Whisper), various useful things like those. If we use (Fly) then scouting will be easy, but the Earl doesn't have anyone who can use it."

That remind me, Zena-san's goal was to fly through the sky isn't it?

"If you manage to fly, then it'd be nice to have a date in the sky~"

I was joking, but Zena-san turns red to her neck and says "P, please leave it to me" while fumbling her words.

It's cute, but I'm worried if she's ever going to be deceived by a bad man~

◇

In the shades of the roadside trees several cats are curling around. Come to think of it, this is the first time I've seen wild cats since I come here.

"That cat is cute~."

Zena-san looks like she'll run there if left alone.
I'm of cat's faction too, that's why I can't let cats' afternoon nap to be disturbed!!
So I bring up this talk.

"That remind me, there are no wild dogs in this city."
"There's a rumor that wild dogs, if seen, will become meals for the people of the slum..."
"It's a lie, isn't it?"
"Yes, it's a lie.
But a rumor like that do exist, it seems that ripe gabo fruits eaten with dog are quite addicting. So, ever since that fruit began to be consumed, wild

dogs disappeared."

Gabo fruits appear again. Have some restrain!

People catching sights of hunters going to the meat processing plant in the east street with their dog partners seems to be the root of that rumor.

◇

"Punishment for the demon's kin! Receive blessing by striking the demon with these holy stoooones!"

Halfway into the east street, we're hearing a faint voice verging on falsetto like it's coming from an old man. There are also voices of a lot of people.

On the square from the alley turn, there's a fat middle-aged man priest standing in an expensive looking pedestal.
With bloodshot eyes, bubbles fly from his mouth.

"O people with virtue! Do you remember the divine punishment also known as Star Fall from the other day!"
"""Oooo!"""
"""We remember!"""
"""Oooooo!"""

Isn't about half of the shouting people are faking it?

"Furthermore! FurtherMORE! Yesterday, the Earl's castle had been hit by an attack of the demon lord's executive!"
"""Oh Gods!"""
"""Please save us, hero-sama!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""

Shouting is a good way to relieve stress huh.

"This is a sign of the dimming of the god's divine protection! Acquire blessings! O people with virtue! Those who gain blessings will be

protected from disaster!"
"""Priest-sama! Please save us!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""
"""Blessings!!!"""

Such cheap people.

"Acquires blessing! Do you understand people! Blessings!"
"""Blessings!!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""
"""Please teach us!"""

This town's people would be easily deceived by fraudulent calls or shady pyramid scheme.

"Look at those fellows!"

The fat priest point at the back of the square.

"Those fellows are demi-human, the washout of the demon, no, the kin of the demon lord! Give divine punishment to those fellows and receive blessings!"
"""Oooooo!"""
"""KILL!!!"""

Oi oi agitator.

"Wait! People of virtue! Murder is prohibited by the law of the kingdom. Wait!"
"""What should we do, priest-sama!!"""
"""KILL!!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""
There are a lot of people who are just clamoring.

"Killing is prohibited! With these holy stones hit the demon's kin and receive blessings."

"""Priest-sama!"""
"""Give us the stones~!"""

""Oooooo!"""

I look at the direction the fat priest points to. 3 beastkin girls are there.

"But it's not free! Receive the blessings using your own money!!"

"""Oooooo!"""
"""Blessings!!!"""

Dog, Cat, and Lizard beastkin girls are huddling together.

"The holy stones are 1 copper coin each! For this special occasion, you can get 6 stones for one big copper coin!"

Ah, the voices from the people stop. What a calculating populace~

"What's wrong! Pious men and women! There's a limit on these holy stones! Those who receive blessings are those who act fast!"

"""We'll buy it!"""
"""Please sell it to me!!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""

They sure are weak with limited edition.

"Buy it from my disciples here! Line up! If you don't properly line up, you won't get the blessings!"

"""Oooooo!"""
"""Line up!"""

Fat priest, did you just use mind manipulation magic?
People who have bought the holy stones unreservedly throw it at the beast girls. They don't hesitate there.

Eh~~~? Are you serious?

"I cannot watch this!"

Zena-san pushes her way through the crowds running to the fat priest's place.
I was taken aback and late to respond.

"""Kill the demi-human!!"""
"""Oooooo!"""
"""Punishment for the demon kin!!!"""

The people are heating up and sporadically hit the beast kin girls with the stones.
The lizard girl are protecting the smaller dog and cat girls.

Now then, it's easy to interrupt this from the front, but if the same thing happen again later then there is no meaning to it.

Detailed information from the AR come up like usual when I look at the beast kin girls.

This is!

I quickly chew through the information I've found.
Then, it should be somewhere.

There!

I investigate the guy's information and is convinced.
With this, I should manage somehow!

I whip my gray brain cells to explore the best solution...

2-6. Arguments and the Extermination of the Hidden Evildoer Afternoon

Satou's here. "In any ages, agitators never disappear.", such phrase exist, but let alone in ages, even in different world they don't disappear.

Well then, let's settle this.

Adding another page to the history of Seryuu city...

◇

Staring at the 3 beast kin girls, I found the name of the master of the girls.

It's not the name of the fat priest.

Then, where is the master of the girls?

Thinking the possibilities, either the master is not here, or he can't go against the fat priest... or he's a partner of the fat priest.

Right now, since we can't find the information with just AR, I use the special ability of All Map Exploration.
I search the name of the master.

There, on the edge of the square. It's a small man with fox-like eyes, grinning at the commotion in the square while sitting atop of a wooden box.

I inspect the information displayed on the AR.

The small man's name is Uusu. 39 years old. His skills are [Fraud],[Persuasion] and [Intimidation]. Owned slaves are [Cat kin],[Dog kin],[Lizard kin]。

....Hmm? Do slaves only display their kin's type with no name?

No, those kind of things don't matter.
I need more information.
It's still not enough.

Affiliation [Seryu City, Lower Class Citizen]. Guild [Brown Rat].

This is it, guild [Brown Rat]. Begin Search!
Members are 52 people. Including the 10 people in this square. Excluding Uusu and the bodyguard-like big man behind him, 8 men are fake demonstrators in the square.
I mark all people, including the one not present in this place.

Now then, let's begin the action!

>[Inference Skill Acquired]
>[Behind the Scene Skill Acquired]

...But the beast kin girls are probably very shaken with those abuses. I had overlooked an important information. I can't turn back the time, but right now, if I delay the first step the result might be different...

◇

Zena-san arrives before the fat priest.

"Pleas stop this inhuman conduct!"
"What's this little girl! Are you an ally of the demon?"

Before one become aware, his followers have disappeared. Moreover, since he can't refute back, the agitators' butt in for him.

""""Allies of the demon are demons too!""""
""""Oooooooo!""""

In the space of the time Zena-san gained, first I have to do something about

the fakers in the crowd.

"Please do not be deceived! Does Zaikuon temple intend to break the law of the kingdom!"
"What's wrong with beating the demon with holy stones?"

What a disengaged conversation. No, the priest understand, he's just shifting the point.
I activate [Spy] and slip into the crowd. While moving through the crowd, I also activate [Evasion] and [Fighting].

"""Oooooo!"""
"That's right! Let's throw stones at that little girl!!!"
"""Oooooo!"""

Zena-san use <<Wind Protection>> not only to herself but also to defend the beast kin girls. As expected of a magic soldier of the army.

Now then, while they're still dumbfounded let's put this crowd into order. Even for Zena-san, if a lot people rush together it would be dangerous.

I move beside the (Brown Rat) man who's still trying to incite stone throwing. I wonder if it's the effect of the skill, I was able to choose what kind of attack to neutralize him, and even while being hidden to the surrounding doing it.
I neutralize the (Brown Rat) man with just one attack. And just like that, I throw him to the alley. Because time is precious, I don't have time to restrain him.

>[Abduction Skill Acquired]
>[Assassination Skill Acquired]

Abduction skill seems to be usable, I raise it to maximum. I don't take the Assassination skill. I won't take it you know?

In the center of the square, a priest with different clothing is helping Zena-san. It's a blue-collar worker handsome middle-aged man.

"Equating demi-human with demon, rather than Zaikuon temple, Isn't it just

you who say such thing?"

"Hum, the philanthropist priest from the Garleon temple huh? If you like beasts that much then after this beating, use them as you like, from the front, the back, whichever."

Uwa, he's the worst sexual harasser. Zena-san is turning red... or not. Did she not understand the meaning. Par exellence.

"Kill the demi-human!"
""Oooooo!!""
"Punishment for the demon!"

I'll leave the dispute on the stage to Zena-san and her reinforcement, and proceed to exterminate the harmful pests (Brown Rat) here. I successfully knock 2, 3 people unconscious and leave them on a suitable alley. Sake bottles are falling around nearby but I don't have time to spare.

"Do you understand! If you keep fueling anxiety on people, it could end up in revolt! Zaikuon temple will be blamed as the mastermind behind it!"
"Foolish lizard who borrows the skin of dragon! Don't kill the demon you say? Aren't you the traitor here!"
"Kill the demon!!"
""Oooooo!""
"Maybe that little girl is a demon in disguise?!"

The extermination is half complete. The crowd's shouting has become considerably less too... There's a particular guy with an awfully loud voice. Though he doesn't seem to be a part of Brown Rat. Let's mark him for now. Let's get in contact after the extermination is complete.

"Everyone from the east street! Everyone else is also anxious just like you! But that's not an excuse to torture the weak like cowards!"
"Did you hear that everyone! Garleon temple deem you as evils! He said that everyone here, eager to receiving blessings, as evils!"

"Kill the demon!!"
""Oooooo!""
"You damn fake priest!"

Good, only 2 more remaining.
I bring them down and roll them to the alley.

Before I set up the stages with Uusu, I got into contact with the loud-voice-kun to prepare for the event.

>[Conspiracy Skill Acquired]

"Please stop this already. No matter how many of you throw the stones, I will prevent it!"
"You bastard, do you intend to interfere this holy conduct! Foolish one who goes against God!"

The fat priest shout to the point bubbles fly from his mouth, but people who support him are sparse. Even those voices are disappearing 1 by 1 now.

I tap on the shoulder of Uusu.

"It's your turn now."
"Wh, who are you bastard! Oi, Banze! Crush this bastard!"

While surprised, Uusu ordered the big man behind. But he fell into confusion when he look back and couldn't find the man from earlier.

"Banze? Where's that halfwit gone to!"
"That big man (Banze) has gone somewhere with a woman."

In truth, he's currently fainted in the alley though.
I twist the arm of Uusu and take him along up to the stage.

"Everyone, please disband here. If you keep this up, the army will really come! If you are anxious then go to the temple, I'll listen to your worries no matter how much!"
"You bastard, do you intend to interfere this holy conduct! Foolish one who goes against God!"
<TLN: Yes, he said the same exact things as earlier>

Aren't you both priests?

I throw Uusu in the middle of them.

"Oh, Uusu-dono! You bastard! What have you done to this pious person who provided the demi-human for this holy conduct! You apostate!"
"Zena-san, please use magic to isolate voices from outside for the slaves."

Before Uusu get up to command the slaves, Zena-san has completed the spell.

"Dog, Cat, Lizard! Beat these guys up!"
Since command didn't reach the slaves, they're tilting their necks looking puzzled.
For once, I pick up a holy stone (lol), and throw it at the solar plexus of the man. Oh, he faints in agony.

"Zena-san, thanks for waiting. Thank you for your hard work too, handsome middle-aged priest (the priest over there)-san. This guy is the ringleader."
"As expected of Satou-san. You're not just nimble!"
"Who are you"

Your praise vector is a bit strange, Zena-san.

"Zena-san, if you still have some magic left, could you cast a spell to make our voices heard throughout the square?"
"Okay! ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■ ■■■ Whisper Wind."

I raise the fainted Uusu with both hand to make him visible.
I plan to use the handsome middle-aged priest as cover to make me look inconspicuous.
Wa, don't move priest-san.

"Everyone, can you see him? This man is the culprit! This man lent his slaves to this Zaikuon temple's priest, agitated your worries and sold common stones to steal your precious money!"

>[Condemnation Skill Acquired]

"'GIVE OUR MONEY BACK------!'"
An especially loud voice comes out from the crowd. Fueled by that voice,

series of, "Give our money back", shouts begin.

"Furthermore, these guys have other goal! To gain small profit and to use the Zaikuon temple for their true purpose! They want to incite everyone's here and start a revolt on the Earl! They are actually worshipers of the demon!"

Scammer skill at its peak! orz.

The small profit part is probably true though. The remaining two were just something I made up.
In fact, even until now I don't understand the purpose of this man so I'm shaking his up to spit it out.

>[False Charge Skill Acquired]

If his purpose is to sell holy stones, even if 100 stones are sold, that's 4 silver coins. It does not match the price of 3 demi-human slaves. From Market skill's judgment, the three are worth for about 6 silver coins. If they had continued the throwing just before, the slaves would undoubtedly be dead.
See? The calculation doesn't fit.

"'That guy is being manipulated by the demon from the shadow, is it.....!'"
That guy, I did ask him to put the priest in disadvantageous position, but read the air. This could become another riot.

"I will deliver this man to the lord for attempted revolt. Fat priest (Zaikuon Temple), you were being deceived by this man isn't it?"

The priest's eyes are swimming.

"Ye, Yes, I was deceived. So he was a demon worshiper! I, I'm not in the wrong... noble-sama! I was deceived. That's why I don't have the slightest bit of revolting against the Earl..."
"Yeah, that would be right. Then please give the money back to the people. That will surely give you better treatment."

Of course, it's an empty promise. Scammer skill is scary. Words are coming

out fluently...
The fat priest is unwillingly gives the disciples instruction to give the money back. Group of two or three people are leaving the square. Later, a quarrel between people who didn't buy the stones and the disciples break out.

Kukukukuku.

Uusu who got his feet trampled down and can't move laughs creepily.
Did he go crazy, or does he have some kind of plan?
He wouldn't convince anyone with arguments full of holes. He looks like someone who loves to use violence anyway.

But, it was different than what I expected. Even while lying face down and completely unable to move, an attack from a swing of black hand came out. I was able to dodge by a hairbreadth but the poison claws teared through the fat priest.

2-7. Demon Return

Satou's here. "I must pay attention to his arms", even after I murmured so, I completely forgot about it halfway through.

However, it's just an arm. Let's just crush it and end it soon.

◇

"What the heck is that arm?!"

The fat priest who got his internal organs torn by the sharp claw dies instantly.
And, Uusu who wields that poisonous claw looks like he doesn't understand what's happening....

"T, that arm!"
"From yesterday, isn't it?"

Zena-san nods.

"Do you know something?"
"It's the arm of the higher ranking demon who attacked the lord's castle yesterday."

Zena-san dutifully answered the handsome middle-aged priest's question.

...What kind of situation is this.
Uusu doesn't look like he's a demon from the beginning.
Then, he's probably a host of a demonic parasite, although I don't know the why or how.

Let's check Uusu's information once again.

...There, [Abnormal Status: Demonic Possession]. If only I saw it earlier!

Even though I have cheat, if I don't use it skillfully then it's meaningless... I should reflect on it.
The problem is how to defeat it.

"If I try to pull it out by force, that man is probably going to die, what should we do?"
"We don't have the leisure for such things, let's call for reinforcement immediately!"
"I will try to confine it! ■■■■ ■■■■■ ■■ ■■■■■■..."

The priest's chant is too long.

"Zena-san, please call for reinforcement. It's probably the fastest to call the central with the help of wind magic."

For now, let's keep Zena-san in the safe zone.
After hesitating for a bit, Zena-san runs while saying "I'll be back asap".

The poisonous claw tried to attack here, but Uusu couldn't get up so it didn't reach.

The arm grow from the area around the chest of Uusu.
In the beginning, the arm was about 1 meter long but it continues to grow longer little by little.

Is it growing?

A stone thrown from the crowd hit the side of the head of Uusu. It hit with quite a sound.
This time, an arrow flying from behind pierces through Uusu's neck. When I was dumbfounded, another three arrows hit in a row.
When I look behind, two hunters appear from the shadow.

"...We bring down the prey when we are presented with the chance to."

Since when were you guys here.

However, it's a world which treats life cheaply. For the time being, we're saved without any intervention from me. I may become a peace-loving idiot.

Uusu who should've been dead, get up with straight posture and no bent joint, looking like a Kyonshii (Chinese vampire). From that body, black light(?) emerges.

"You worms, for destroying this annoying host's brain. I thank you."

...Demon-kun, I like you better when you didn't talk.

"....■■■■　■■■■■ <<Cirlce of Anti-Evil>>!"
"How impertinent. I laugh."

The demon is looking uninterested, the handsome middle-aged priest invokes the spell which seal the hand of the demon with light magic square.

Even though the demon snickers at it, the magic square persist.

"Gunununu. This isn't a magic that should have been able to be used by human!　I miscalculate"

The handsome middle-aged priest has begin casting for another spell.
The hunters withdraw, knowing that it's not an opponent that could be defeated with arrows.

The people who remain in this square are just me, the handsome middle-aged priest, and the three beast kin girls.
Probably interested with the situation, some people are peeking from the shadow of rooftops around the square.

Everyone sure can run fast~
The three beast kin daughters are chained together to a stake stuck in the square, so they can't run away.

For now, let's get the beastkin daughters out of harm way. I shouldn't lose the real reason of why I got into trouble with the fat priest in the first place.

Tearing off the chains would be too conspicuous, so I pull out the stake.

Since I didn't look like I use too much force, even if someone saw it they would think that the ground is loose.

"It's dangerous here, quickly get away. Since I can't take off the chain, go hide behind the shadow of a sturdy building together."
"Impossible, nyesu"
<TLN: Nyaa+Desu>

The cat girl timidly speaks while occasionally chokes on her words. It seems that Uusu ordered them to "Don't move away from this place", and if they oppose it the collar will put them to death... This is troublesome.

I can't wait for the army to arrive here. Their war potential has fallen from yesterday, and there is not enough road space to bring the cannon here. There is no room for cavalries either. The magicians' number has also decreased sharply.
If it like this, if I play around the victims will only increase. I don't want Zena-san and the three beastkin girls to die here.

Let's disguise into masked hero, and finish the demon when the handsome middle-aged priest cast his holy magic.

I transformed(lol) before the demon begin to do something troublesome.

"That bastard over there. You worm dare to ignore me, I am angry!"

I face the arm demon. The AR indication has changed from Uusu to Demon kin. On the space for the name, phonetic symbols lined up instead of normal letters.
Has Uusu been swallowed completely?
Checking the AR while keeping the demon in sight, the beast kin girls status has also changed to [Master : none].

"You bastard, who are you? I am uncomfortable."

"A confirmation for now, you're not Uusu but a demon right?"

"Wa, wait! I am Uusu! Please take off this arm, I don't want to die! Please help!!"

Huh? Is his consciousness intact?
When I think of that for a moment, the arm demon [launches] three poisonous nails.

"Mufufufufu~. Humans always react this way~ I am thrilled."

I block the poisonous nails with the stake in the nick of time. The stake changes color and crumbles in a moment.

"Unununu, you blocked that, I am astonished!"

I pick up a holy stone on the ground. Should I weaken him with this?

The man's jaw start to transform to look like a wolf.
Before the transformation complete, I throw the stone at him but it was blocked with the poisonous claw.

"Fushurururu~. It's easier to talk now. I am excited ♪"

Here, it's painful to hear your way of speaking though.

"■■■ <<Sacred Javelin>>."

Spear of light formed from thin air flies from the handsome middle-aged priest.

"I ridicule."

The arm demon roars, wall of darkness erupts and divert the course of the light spear.
As I thought, he's not only able to talk easier but also able to use magic now.

"Everyone, please quickly get away from this square! Attack magic is incoming!!!"

I desperately raise my voice to tell the people who are peeking the square!

>[Loudspeaker Skill Acquired]

"All the panic, fear, anxiety, prejudice, arrogance since earlier are truly splendid! I am satisfied."

I'm going to be fine, but at this rate, the beastkin girls are going to die if left alone.
An especially large long roar comes out of the arm demon.

"Therefore, let this place become moi nesting ground. Aren't you happy? I service!"

Should I carry the beastkin girls on my shoulder and run? It can't be helped if I attract attention.
Consequently, while having such needless worry, the situation is changing rapidly.

The ground below is warping like special effects from Showa era shows. Even though the ground is hard, it's flashing dark violet light, warping, twisting, stretching... and the flash [Darken].

◇

When the light settles, I was in a place that look like a cave. Beside the ground which is unchanged, everything else look like bare rocks. In the space of around 10 Meter in radius, I see an exit on one of the wall.
I can somehow see it thanks to the faint purple light coming from the floor.

People who are here include me, the still-chained dog and cat girl I carry in my arms and the lizard girl on my shoulder.

The handsome middle-aged priest and the arm demon who were nearby before, aren't here.

"Welcome to moi Labyritnth. It still doesn't have name, and monsters are being created right now, you can thank moi for it. I am diligent!"

The arm demon's voice are coming from somewhere. It doesn't seem like telepathy.

The dog girl is pointing at the corner of the ceiling. It seems that the voice is coming from the air hole there.

"For the sake of moi complete revival, experience fear at your heart's content. Kill each other! Snatch everything. I encourage!"

After pausing for a bit, the arm demon continues.

"The souls of those who resigns are thin, I hate."

"Therefore, every room are connected to the exit and moi room. I am fair."

"I am expecting the despair that come after the hope. Strive, fodders! I encourage!"

...I see.
This is like the forced event [Escape from the Labyrinth Mission] in video game. Outbreak! That kind of feeling.
Phew.

>Title [Labyrinth Explorer] Acquired

2-8. The Labyrinth of Demon (1)

Satou's here. While thinking that it's going to be city adventure, suddenly it become dungeon attack, I am unable to follow the situation, Satou.

The labyrinth was easily created but I wonder if the exit is on the downtown?

An adventure guild could probably be established after some years.

◇

When I'm confirming the map, [Labyrinth of Demon, Bottom Layer], is displayed, the passage ways are not displayed.
...It's not going to be that convenient, is it?

The beastkin girls look anxious.
First of all, let's take care it.

"I'm Satou. A peddler"

"Cat nyesu"
"Dog nanodefu"
"Lizard"
The cat and dog girl choked on their words. While scraping sound can be heard halfway through the lizard girl's words.

It's not only Uusu who did it, even their master from before called them like that. The cat and the dog girls were slaves from birth but the lizard girl wasn't and she seemed to had have a name before becoming a slave. However, it's a long name mixed with incorrigible sound difficult to pronounce.

In the end, since they asked me to give them name that's easy to call, I name them "Pochi","Tama", and "Liza". Don't treat them like pets! You may be

angry like that, but I don't have the confidence to remember them right with normal names so please forgive me, at least until we get out of this labyrinth.
Liza is not the Lizard's girl real name but it's just a cut out of "Lizard" word.

Now then, before we begin the escape, let's cure the beastkin girls first.
I take out cloths, a water bottle, and ointments from the bag. The ointments are sample products from the alchemy set. Since it's just a sample, I don't have a lot but it's probably sufficient.

"Disinfect your wounds with this cloths soaked with water from this bottle. After that smear the ointment to the wound and coil it with the cloth. Don't use the cloth you used for the disinfection okay?"

The beastkin girls are perplexed when I hand them over new cloths.
They're probably bewildered to be spoken not in commanding words for the first time, yeah. I feel like I'm back to nursing my smaller relatives back in the days.

"What's wrong? I will face the other way while you girls are treating your wounds, so don't worry."

Apparently it's not because they're embarrassed, but because they rarely ever got good cloth and ointment as slaves.

"Thank you, nanodesu. You don't have to face the other way nanodesu."
"Beautiful cloth. I'm happy~."
"Since the master is dead, we cannot possibly pay you back. It's better to put aside water and medical treatment until after we get out of the labyrinth... um, well... isn't it..."

The incomprehensible words are converted to proper sentences in the brain. It's good isn't it?

Pochi and Tama untie the string that tied the simple clothes they were wearing and undress without hesitation to begin treating their wounds.
Liza-san seems to be the thoughtful type and hesitate a little, but I [Order] her not to mind so she also begin the treatment.

When their treatments are finished, I distribute the baked sweets to the three. I give them 3 palm-sized sweets each. It should be enough for now. The sweets are remainder from the time when I went to various stalls with Zena-san. It's not bitten leftovers though.

Pochi drools all over her face, everyone stare at the sweets, but no one is eating.

"There are no poison in it, so eat it well."

Are they not allowed to eat without orders? Slaves
sure are oppressed~ Pochi chokes on the food so I pass her the water bottle.

"I won't take it away, eat it slowly."

I feel like a baby-sitter for a bit...

◇

I confirm the map once again. It still only displays this room.
...Is the magic ineffective, or is it dispelled...

I open the menu and use the [All Map Exploration] magic. Even though this particular magic is easily usable~.
<TLN: He's talking about how he's unable to use other magic lol>

The whole picture of [Labyrinth of Demon] is displayed. Easy mode is too good!

This looks like an ant's nest, rather than a labyrinth.
The passage from here to the next room is diverged like a tree's root, from that room to the other the passages diverge again like before. In labyrinth-like fashion, there are also secret intertwined secret passage ways that connect rooms.

Searching through the map, there are 109 humans here. In which 7 are

demi-human. The remaining 102 are human kins with around a quarter of them being slaves.

The handsome middle-aged Garleon priest is in a considerable remote position. If we can meet up with him, it'd be already near the exit huh? I personally don't want him to end up dead, being a capable person he is, though he probably won't die easily so I will consider it lucky if we can meet him.

I tried searching for the arm demon but I couldn't find him. There's a particular room located in the deepest part, he's probably there...
If I carelessly beat him, the labyrinth may collapse, let's leave him alone for now.

The enemies are around level 10-20 of insect monsters. There were around 20 when I first searched, but now, there are more than 100. Additionally, snake and frog monsters appear too.

Let's give the beastkin girls some weapons since it could be bad if we were sandwiched between the passage.
Okay, let's look for some hidden suitable location in the passage to take some spear and sword from the storage.

After deciding what to do, I tried to go toward the passage but I was stopped by the beastkin girls in a hurry.

"Please don't throw me away! I will do anything!"
"Please don't leave me behind!"
"Mister, I don't mind being a sacrifice but please take me along. Please."

They desperately tried to stop me. Still no one tried to pull my clothes, is it because their experience as slaves or training?

"Don't worry. I was just going to see the state of the passage. I won't abandon you, so please be at ease."

I'm talking as gently as possible. Though I don't think it will fully relieve them, it's better than not saying anything.
After the three girls finished eating, I take out out daggers and magic gun

from the bag and equip them (to himself and the girls).

Only Liza who has combat related skill, [Spear]. Since I can't exactly take a spear out of the bag, I take out another dagger and give it to Liza. Probably because it's uncommon for slaves to have weapon, she hesitated but I pushed it to her.

I take the vanguard position, Liza is responsible for surprise attack from the back. Liza wanted to do the battle by herself but I asked her to be on the rear.
Since I have radar, there is no possibility of surprise attack, but I'm giving her the role to ease the girls' uneasiness a little.

The order is me, Tama, Pochi, and Liza. I [Order] them with a strong tone to not participate in battle. Since their level are only around 2-3, if they carelessly receive an attack they could die.

It's an escort mission for real.

◇

The floor on the passages become that of rocks. Since there aren't any paved stones that emit light anymore, it's dark. The fortunate thing? There are several shining stone pillars every few meters so, even though it looks eerie, at least we are able to walk.
The stone pillar is about a waist's height. Since the light only reach around our breast's area, the ceiling is pitch dark, it's unpleasant.

It was probably made so to fuel anxiety.
Such a detestable demon-like thing to do.

When someone got into a room the passages will turn pitch black to encage them inside, there are probably thing like that prepared.

"Tama, if you see anything in the passage ahead, tell me in low voice. Pochi, if you smell or hear anything strange, tell me about it. Liza, please be wary of the back. But please don't focus all your attention on the rear and be late

to follow us."
"""Yes"""

I'm still a bit uneasy, but it's a good reply.

>[Leadership Skill Acquired]
>[Formation Skill Acquired]

Sign of the enemies are detected in the radar. It's quite a bit far ahead.

"I can smell blood from the other side of the passage, nanodesu."

Pochi said that.
It's a straight line from here, but it's still 500 meter away.

I praise Pochi while petting her head. This treatment is like what you're doing to a pet, but her tail flails around with pitter-patter, she's probably happy about it.

I investigate the enemy while walking closer. Level is 20, no special ability. Method of attack is ramming and biting. It seems that there are only one monster in the next room.

I just remember something and take a note of the current stat and abilites of the three, since they also have experience value column, I draw a plan... This really feels like a game.

Since the experience values are displayed as percentage, I don't know the concrete number, but it's still really convenient when gaining levels. Since I can't see the experience value of other person in the map, I wonder if this is restricted to party members? Or are there other conditions to follow?

I saw the light leaking from the room.

I instruct the three to wait and peek at the room. The insect-shaped enemy is single-mindedly eating [Something], paying no attention here. Like I said... I'm weak against gore you know.

I wait until the chewing sound stop, then shoot it with the magic gun.

The single shot blows through the hind leg's joint. The broken parts flies.

I'm not giving the huge cricket any room for counterattack, killing it in rapid-fire.

Good grief, why is this giant cricket appear in anywhere but a desert...
<TLN: Is this a reference to Haruhi?>

"Amazing, nanodesu."
"Amazing."
"Mister, are you a magician?"

Pochi and Tama are simply in high spirits, but Liza is having a question.

"This is a magic weapon you know. Don't tell this to anyone!"

I gave the warning while grinning badly. I didn't forget to pose with the magic gun.
Pochi and Liza nodded seriously, but Tama said "Ay", while looking so happy. I'm going to give another warning once we get out of the labyrinth.

The chain on the collar is obstructive. Tama is full with just holding the chain on her hand.
That's right, I can cut it with this.

I call Liza and ask her to pull the chain horizontally, then I shoot it with the magic gun.
I did the same thing to Tama and Pochi... but they were probably afraid, their ears were flat down.
I put the chain in the bag and give it to Pochi to hold.

Since the torn foot from the giant cricket was 2 meter long, I make an impromptu spear out of it.
I raised the weapon creation skill to level 1 first.

The nail parts on the toe are loose, so I fix it in place with a piece of wood and a leather strap. Since green fluids are oozing from the cut part, I wrap it with the used cloths from the treatment earlier.

When I'm going to give Liza the cricket spear... She is currently cutting the joint section of the cricket's head, working on something.

Is she hungry?

"Liza, if you eat that kind of thing, you'll have a stomachache."
"Y, You're mistaken. Since it's a monster, it should have a magic core inside, so I'm retrieving it..."

Magic core?

>Title [Insect Slayer] Acquired

2-9. Labyrinth of Demon (2)

Satou's here. I've given up on the idea that this is a dream, but now I'm thinking that this might not be a reality but inside a game instead, I'm having such doubt after being bewildered. If it's like that I would have preferred the world of eroge instead, Satou.

It's just my luck to have a cricket as the first enemy in the labyrinth, although I hope it makes getting out of the labyrinth alive easier.

Without attracting attention that is.

◇

"What is magic core?"
"Magic core can become money. If you give the things from a monster to a peddler, you can get various things."

Liza's answer isn't exactly wrong, but not what I wanted to hear, I guess expecting the jack-of-all-trades Nadi-san's bell-like reply is impossible.

Liza takes out a ball covered with green blood dirt from the monster. It's a red ball about half the size of a fist. Since the color is dull red, it's probably unusable as jewelries.

When she comes back, I pass a pouch from the bag to Liza. I also give her a bit dirty remaining cloth to wipe the clotted blood.

"Put the magic core inside this pouch. Also, use this spear."

I give the pouch to Pochi, and pass the cricket spear to Liza. The dagger which Liza had is handed over to Tama.
Exchanging equipments, truly RPG'stic huh~.

"Liza, for the next magic core retrieval, Tama and Pochi will help you, so teach them how to do it."
"Yes, I understand."
"Okay, nano desu."
"Ay~"

"Oh yeah, Pochi."
"Yes, nano desu."
"You don't have to force yourself to say nanodesu okay?"
"If I don't say it, I'll get spanked, nano desu."

I see, she was instilled to do it huh... Since I'm just a temporary master anyway, there's no need to correct it.

"Okay then, but I won't get mad even if you don't use it, so don't force yourself."
"Yes... nano desu."

We pray for whoever was the victim of the cricket and get out of the room. I wrote the name of the corpse in the memo.

I compared the girls' status before and after the battle, but beside their stamina, nothing has changed.

So they won't get experience just by being together?
Then, how do supply troops or priest raise their levels?

If I can raise the three's level then even if we meet more people in the way, it'd be no problem, however it's not that easy after all.

Since this world is game-like anyway, should I try a game-like approach?

"Tama, if you see a stone about as big as the magic core earlier on the ground pick it up."
"Ay!"

◇

We progress forward smoothly until the passage divides into branches. They all lead to the same room, but one of the path has another room in the middle of the way. Either of them contains monster but the middle room has two level 10 caterpillar monster. And, there are also human there.... Let's help them.

"The road is branching~, nyan."

Just as the junction comes into our view, a report come in from Tama. You don't have to add strange words to establish your character, I said...
I praise Tama while patting her head. She seems ticklish.
Since Pochi looks at us enviously, I also pat her head gently.
Since both of them are about as tall as my chest, they're easy to pat. Are they about 120cm? Liza is a bit taller than me... around 165cm then.

"Let's go to the right passage."

We proceed further. There's something appearing in the radar but what is it?

"There are bugs up there~ nano desu."

Tama warned. This time she's imitating Pochi huh?
Now then, how do we beat invisible enemies?

Since I can grasp its rough position from radar, I look there.
I keep staring there.

AR display pops up with the monster's name and level.

I indiscriminately and repeatedly shoot at the place where the AR is.

Phew phew phew. Bota.

It seems that one of the shot hit, the caterpillar fall onto the ground.

"Tama, hit it with the stone."

Tama hits it for about 3 times. After two hit, the body of the caterpillar

repels the stone. It seems that only one of the hit gives damage.
The caterpillar is approaching.

"Pochi, Tama, get back. Liza, come here. Hit it once from behind my back."

While holding back as much as I can, I kicked the caterpillar which was ramming here to gain time.
Liza attacks with the spear during that chance! The caterpillar's HP decreases for about 10%.
After confirming that, I shoot it twice until it die.

"Liza, Tama, I'll leave the recovery of the magic core to you. Pochi, follow me, there's another monster over there."

Tama hands over some stones to Pochi. How many did she pick?

There's the same caterpillar as earlier inside the room.
Furthermore, there are corpses of a young woman and a boy that looks like a slave on the ground. Unlike with the cricket earlier, they're not eaten.

"Pochi, when we get into the room, throw the stone at the monster from my side. When you run out of the stone, go back to Liza's place."

I casually enter the room and shoot the magic gun. As instructed, Pochi throw 2 stones from close range.
The caterpillar who got hit by the stone turn toward Pochi, spitting venom. In the nick of time, I kick the caterpillar's head shifting the direction. The caterpillar dies with just that kick.

Pochi who has finished throwing the stones runs back to the passage.

To the opposite passage that is.
Did she get flustered and mistook the way?

"Pochi, stop!"

I immediately chase after her. Detouring the caterpillar's corpse, I was a bit late.

"Uwa~~~ don't come, don't come here~~~!"

Huh? Who's that? It's not Pochi's voice. It's the man on passage!
I look at the radar. The position is dangerous.

"Pochi, stop!"

Okay, she can hear me properly now. Pochi is coming back here.
The man from earlier has disappeared from the radar.

Still, why did that young man run away?
Did he mistook Pochi for a monster?
Or did he feel guilty for leaving the two people in the earlier as sacrifices...

"Master! Are you alright?"
"You okay?"

Liza and Tama are coming here running.

"Ah, I'm okay. Let's go back to the room earlier to collect the magic core."
"I'm sorry, nano desu."

Pochi is apologizing with her ears falling flat. Her tail is also curling between her thigh.

"Pochi, it's fine to run away. But panicking is not okay. Do you understand?"
"...Yes."

I pat Pochi's head like, pom-pom.

When we got to the room, Liza and Tama are dismantling the caterpillar.
I write the two corpses name on the memo, I wonder if there's anything useful... I ask Pochi to examine them.
...Since well, you don't usually want to touch corpses, do you?

"Should I strip the clothes?"

Pochi asked, but we don't exactly need their clothes. I've only noticed just

now, but the beastkin girls aren't wearing shoes.

"Take the footwears. Leave the clothes as it is."

Pochi passes over the collected things. The slave boy doesn't have anything, but the woman has a purse and jewelries like ring and necklaces. I create a folder in the storage and named it memento, then I put the mementos there. I will give it to the deceased's family later. I just got an idea to cut the hair of the two and put it in the memento folder.

The sandals are for Pochi and Tama to wear.
Liza, the biggest child, has to wait for her turn later. In the next room with the giant caterpillar, there should be shoes of the young man from earlier, so she wouldn't have to wait for long.

◇

The experiment to attack, however the damage, is apparently successful. Tama and Liza are raised by one level, Pochi by two.

Apparently one automatically learn skill if they level up, Pochi got throwing skill, Tama got collecting skill, and Liza got dismantling skill.

But I don't have dismantling skill... I should try cutting fish later.

Wait, there's something strange with Liza's skills.
The dismantling skill is grayed out even though the spear skill is white.
Pochi's and Tama's skills are also grayed out.
I wonder if they aren't activated yet. They would be strengthened if I activate it but...

Their attribute values have also increased, but for example, STR is written as 15(18), so it doesn't seem like it instantly rises.

There are still around 100 room before the exit anyway, let's solve it until then!

I lead the beastkin girls (Tama-Pochi-Liza) out of the room.

>Title [Trainer (Tamer)] Acquired

2-10. Labyrinth of Demon (3)

Satou's here. The weak person who yearn for the sun so much, Satou.

Although dungeon is fine if it's in a game.

Fighting insect, insect, frog, insect, snake in a wet, damp basement is getting tiring.

◇

We've passed 6 rooms since then, but we didn't encounter any more living human. We came across several corpses though...

"Master, the magic core recovery is complete."
"Alright, let's take a break."

Liza and the other are passing the water bottle around after drinking for a mouthful.
Before I knew it, they way they call me have changed from [Danna-sama (Mister)] to [Goshujin-sama (Master)]. Since it seems easier for them to use that, I leave it alone.
<TLN: Yep, I've made a huge mistake in the last two chapter. Amended them.>

Liza drops the water bottle.
Water is spilling from the fallen bottle...

"I, I'm very sorry! Master!!!"

Liza desperately picks up the water bottle. Her hands seems to be unsteady. Come to think of it, Pochi's and Tama's throwing accuracies were bad on the battle earlier too...

"Are you tired?"
"I'm very sorry! I wasted the important water. Please punish me in any way."

...You're exaggerating. No, Liza seems to seriously think that.

"Liza, we can just obtain more water. Rather than that, is your body okay?"
"I'm sorry... I feel heavy since earlier, I've tried to move my limbs, but they won't budge."

Pochi and Tama drink the water while lying on the ground looking lifeless. Confirming their status, there doesn't seem to be any abnormality. They're probably tired.

"The break is canceled, let's take a full rest instead."

I lift Pochi and Tama in my arm and drink them the water.
I distribute sweet potato fries to the three. The three look very sleepy, but maybe because they're hungry, they have some vigor left to keep eating.

"After you finish your meal, sleep for 3 hours."

Pochi and Tama sleep with my legs as pillows. Liza shyly curled up into a ball a bit away.

When the three fast asleep, I observe their status.

The attribute values are increasing by 1 every 10 minutes, getting back to its original values. 2 hours after the rest, the grayed out skills turn white.

Speaking of skills, if the three leveled up then their skills would increase right?
They don't get skill just by doing something?

Apparently the improvement from level up is applied after you sleep.
...this is totally like like the masterpiece from the labyrinth's classic. It's scary to age if you're not on the stable.
<TLN: Some kind of Japanese idiom maybe? I don't understand either, sorry.

Edit: Apparently, it's Wizardry reference.>

◇

We broke through more rooms after that. The limit before we need to rest was about 3 level up based on earlier, we should rest after breaking through two more rooms...

"Stop!"

It's rare to see Tama warns without being sluggish.
But there's no enemy on the front?

"What's wrong?"
"The ground is~ strange?"

She answers with a question. There's something wrong on it, but she doesn't know what kind, is it? I watch the ground carefully, the ground texture do looks different. Although the color doesn't differ...
Before I can understand what's the discrepancy is, an AR display with [Trap: Life Drain] written, pops up.

That's right, this is a labyrinth, there should be traps.
Since there wasn't any until now, I forgot about it.

"Well done, Tama. There's a trap there."
"Ay!"

I stroke Tama's head and cat ears.

I let the three withdraw and try throwing stone at the trap, but it doesn't active. From the name of the trap, it probably only reacts to living things. Since I don't know the range of the trap, I can't be sure if we can safely walk through the edge of the passage either. I won't even consider making the beastkin girls step through it.

There are rat monsters on the room after this, maybe I'll try to lure them

here with stones.
I throw 3 stones in a row.

"Rats are coming."

In response to Pochi's report, I make the three fall back. The rats here are only level 10 and weak, but they act in group. Since I can't be sure if they can break through trap or not, let's take some distance.

The rats are caught in black spark far from the trap's location. In the end, the 3 rats are all caught up in separate location. It seems that traps are scattered around in this passage.

>[Trap Release Skill Acquired]
>[Trap Usage Skill Acquired]
>[Trap Discovery Skill Acquired]

Since the trap might be the type that can reactivate, we leave the magic cores behind.
I immediately allocate skill point to just Trap Discovery skill and activate it.

◇

Liza stab at the giant frog's mout with all her might. Pochi and Tama then jump from each opposite side to deliver the finishing strike to the frog's head with their daggers.

"Alright! You did well!"
"Yes!"
"Ay!"
"Nano desu!"

I praise them for the first monster kill they did by themselves. Since the opponent was only a simple level 10 with just tongue restrain as a special skill, I tried to let them to do it, and do it well they did. The fighting power of beastkin is higher than human of the same level after all.

This room is 3 times wider than any other room before. There are possibilities of more enemies with this much space, but I can't sense any sign of them.

There's a house on the edge of the room. The roof is cleanly cut in two. It was probably swallowed up with the creation of the labyrinth.
Unfortunately, there are no human signs on the radar...

Liza is dismantling the frog, Pochi and Tama are keeping guard of the entrances. This time, it's Liza's turn to dismantle huh. Since there's that skill things, I've assigned a rotation for the duty.

"Pochi, Tama, let's check out that house. Follow me."

I go toward the house with the two.
There aren't any corpse from casualties in the house but various things instead. Apparently it was the house of a wealthy person.

Two ornamental short swords surprisingly have decent attack power when I checked it with appraisal skill. In a stereotypical fashion, there's a hidden safe behind a wall painting. I blow the lock with magic gun and check the inside. In addition with a bag of golds and jewels, there's also a magic material called Dragon Powder in a small vial. Was the owner an alchemist?

We collect the small amount of jewelries, but leave the big things, like statues or other work or arts, behind.
Among the work of arts, there are a couple of stuffed animals on pedestals. Though I don't really care, I wonder if they were in the process of being repaired? I sort of want to see the stuffing process of fantasy animals.

>[Excavation Skill Acquired]
>[Treasure Discovery Skill Acquired]
>[Treasure Chest Unlock Skill Acquired]

There's an ignition magic tool (Tinder Rod) in the kitchen. That's the only magic tool here, but we put a frying pan, a pot, and tablewares for 4 people in the bag.
Since I can get water anytime from the water jug, and there are a lot of small water bottles there, so I put oils inside them to make improvised

molotov bombs and put them inside the Storage.

"Here, cheeses and dried meats! Nano desu~♪"

On a collapsed furniture there are big breads, 3 lump of cheeses and some smoked meats inside. After confirming that they're not rotten with the AR, I slice some pieces for Pochi and Tama.

"Let's eat the remainder together with Liza."
"Ay!"
"Yes! Delicious no desu~."

I give the bag with the food to Tama, and bag with accessories and weapons to Pochi, while I'm holding the water jug and tub, we get out.

When we get out, the recovery of magic core is complete.

"Master, I have a request... Is it alright for me to light fire?"
"Fire in underground? What is your reason?"

Liza falters for a bit,

"U, um well, I want to eat the frog's meat... I'm sorry."
"You don't need to apologize, but is that safe to eat?"
"Yes, it's fine. I've dismantled and eat frog from the same family a long time ago. There are internal organs with poison but if we avoid it, it's alright. But if it's not baked there are a danger of poisoning..."
Well, even if this is in underground there's an airflow, and we already climbed up for quite a bit so there's no worry of lack of oxygen.

"Alright, I permit it."

Liza instructs Pochi and Tama to cut the frog's legs, while she herself is taking out wood blocks and chip from the bag and prepare it. I see, it was for this reason that she was collecting woods in every room.

I stop Liza from using flint to light fire, and use the ignition magic tool (Tinder Rod) from earlier to ignite fire... Chakka○n?
<TLN: http://www.vesta-tokai.co.jp/catalog/chakkaman/>

I give the cookwares and the tablewares gotten from the house to Liza.
Before long, Tama and Pochi hold the leg meat high up their head.

"Meat~"
"Nano desu~"

...I wonder, they look even happier than with the smoked meat earlier.

Liza cuts the meat into pieces, and lines it up on the frying pan.

She pierces the baked meats with skewers and presents it to me.
...Do I have to eat it?

"Thank you Liza."

I prepare myself and eat it... It taste a bit like chicken but honestly, it's a bit light. I guess it can't be helped since we don't have seasonings like salt though. It's a hassle to go back to that house just to search for seasoning.

The three people stare at me eating.
Oh right, they're waiting for permission.

"Stop looking and eat. If you don't properly eat and rest, we can't get out of the labyrinth!"

After getting the permission, Pochi and Tama start eating the meat on the frying pan. Liza isn't only frying the meat, she also properly eats it.

I glances at them while lightly toasting the black bread, cheese and the smoked meat to eat it.

After that, a cycle of dismantling, baking and eating repeat for about 30 minutes, the banquet only finish after the fuel run out.
Per the suggestion of Liza, I wrap a lump of meat in cloth and put it in the bag just in case.

If the condition is the same like before, they will get tired after 2,3 battles, so we'll make use of this time to rest to its fullest.
I let the three to bath in the tub, give them new clothes to change, and let

them sleep with a blanket.

Although they'll soon get dirty in battle, Don't you feel better to go sleep with clean clothes?

2-11. Labyrinth of Demon (4)

Satou's here. Labyrinth from classic series usually has treasures, monsters and mysterious traps.
While the danger is immense, the returns you got from easy level up are also huge, these can be said to be the real thrill of the labyrinth.
A party consisting only of warriors sure have pretty bad balance isn't it?

◇

After two more rest along the way, we're finally around 80% of the way out of the labyrinth.
Since the rest before the last one, we haven't seen any more victim's corpses.

Pochi and Tama's equipment have changed to the ornamental short swords. That's the extent of the equipment change, but the three people are now level 13. It seems that their stats are about 3 level higher than the average human kin.
Pochi has [Enemy Search], [Throwing], [Dismantling], and [Short Sword] skills, Tama has [Dismantling],[Collecting] and [Short Sword], Liza has [Cooking],[Dismantling], [Spear] and [Thrusting] skills.

It can be said that their strengths are now world apart from when I first meet them.
If the enemy has no abnormal status attacks then even if it's level 20, the three can handle it. Although it could be dangerous to fight several enemies of the same level since there are no shield users...

"That wall~ is strange?"

Tama senses a strange sensation from the wall inside the room.

When I stare at it, I found a [Hidden Door]. Checking the map, there's

certainly a passage behind.

However...
I change the map view point to bird's eye.
About 5 meter from this room, there's a perpendicular shape with 100 meter diameter right below. A pit, or rather, since it's 3 meter depth, a pitfall trap?
I warn Tama and co not to get close to it.

There's a crossroad after this, beyond that, there seem to be a room with 3 survivors inside. Since they've been resting for 1 hour, it's probably a safe zone there.
Although there are only 5 room left before the exit, because they don't have a map, it can't be helped.

"Everyone, stop!"

The radar indicate a red dot indicating enemy approaching with great speed. Since it's only 1 enemy, I wonder if it's attacking the room earlier?
While falling back I check the enemy's info.
Undead Beast, undead kin, 5 meter length, 2 meter height. The bite can paralyze, attack include the claws. Very agile. Weakness: Holy element.

"Level is... 40 you say?"

The labyrinth's sweeper huh...
It really does feel like the game of old. An abnormally strong enemy will appear to kill the player who's running out of time.

Before we come into contact with the enemy, we get back to the room.
I evacuate Pochi, Tama and Liza to the corner of the room. As expected, the enemy is dangerous. If they're careless, a single blow could kill them.

The enemy casually appear from the passage. Exerting force only when it's necessary huh...
It's a jet black panther-like beast with a red horn on its forehead.

The Undead Beast disappear from views!
I hurriedly look at the radar, but its position hasn't changed...

The enemy attacks from above!
It jumps and kicks the ceiling to plunge its body!
Behind my back, I feel that the floor below cracks.

To be so quick even though it's an undead... If it begin to jump around the three beastkin girls could be in danger.
Fighting it frontally is no good.

Seemingly to harass me, the undead beast opens its jaw before starting its bite attack leaving its open.
I overhead throw it to the wall.

The Undead Beast lands on the wall,

I put power in my foot and attack,

...It then breaks through the wall and fall (to the pit). Amen~.

◇

Now then, why don't we join with the survivors?

Beyond the crossroads, the floor is plastered with sticky white threads.

"Stickystick~"
"My feet is sticky~ no desu."
"I wonder if it's spider's silks?"

Tama and Pochi clear it with short swords.

In the room, there are 7 cocoons. The 3 survivors are among them. We should rescue them while the spider is gone.
When the person inside the cocoon realize that we are closing they begin to wriggle.

Just in case, I check the contents inside before we help them.

Nidoren. Slave trader, 40 years old, level 11, [Negotiation], [Torture], and [Arithmetic] skills.
Viscount Jin Belton. Noble, 33 years old, level 15, [Fire Magic], [Flame Magic], and [Social] skills.
Viscount's daughter Tana Belton. Noble, 14 years old, level 3, [Social],[Etiquette] skills.

The viscount is a good potential force.
Even so, why was a noble in that square?

We're splitting the work to save them.
I handle the viscount, Liza the daughter, Pochi and Tama are responsible for the trader.

Halfway through the rescuing, a spider coming from below are perceived by the radar. Just like with the undead beast earlier, there seems to be a pit here too.

"It's the enemy! Pochi, Tama, Liza, stop the rescue for the moment and prepare to intercept!"

The beastkin girls ready their weapon for interception.
After series of battles, these cooperations are to be expected.

Fortunately the victim's mouths are clogged up, a blessing in disguise. No noisy things are good.

A spider is crawling out from the hole on the floor.
First I hit its head with stones to deprive its consciousness. Then Liza skewers its head with her spear, while Pochi and Tama slice the joint of its body.

I thought it'd die with the first attack but... To not die even after its head has been pierced, truly a monster.

Liza receives the overhead sweep of the spider's leg, Pochi and Tama slice and dice with the short swords during that gap, shaving off the spider's health.
Since it seems that it would take some time, I throw a pebble in secret to

give the finishing blow.

I leave the magic core recovery to Tama, and get back to rescuing with other members.

"I'm saved. I come from the the distinguished family of the founder Yamato-sama, the current head of Belton Viscount, Viscount Jin Belton. Expect rewards after we get out of here!"
"Thank you very much, Viscount-sama. I'm Satou, a merchant."

Just as we finished introductions, the viscount's saving is finished. The viscount goes to her daughter's place, takes the knife from Liza and continues the rescue by himself.
Is it because he doesn't want demi-human to touch her daughter, or because he's thinking of saving her himself.

"Thank you for saving me, I'm Nidoren, a merchant. I'd be disliked by the girls, since I deal with slaves trading."
"I'm a fledgling merchant, Satou."
"A merchant... is it? I thought that you're surely an adventurer."

While listening to Nidoren-shi, I present him cold waters.

"Do you know about adventurers?"
"Yes... ah! It's explorers in Shiga kingdom isn't it. Killing demon in the labyrinth, salvaging magic cores and treasures, it's a high risk high return job."

Tama returns with the magic core and I receive it.

"Putting aside the size of the magic core here, probably because the labyrinth is young, its purity is low."

According to Nidoren-shi, refined magic cores are used in the creation of magic tools, and the higher the purity the more efficient its magic operation is resulting in more advanced magic tools creation.

"Still, it was a brilliant cooperation, the training was certainly long isn't it? Such good slaves can easily fetch 20 gold coin each. I'd love to deal with you

even once."

It seems to be better to not tell him that they're not officially my slaves. Since it looks it'd just come back at me.

I'm leaving mementos recoveries from the cocoons to the beastkin girls.
I pass foods to
viscount Belton and Nidoren. Of course, it's not the frog meats. The viscount heartily eats even while complaining the poor foods. The viscount's daughter only eats the cheese, and sips the water. Surely, she's exhausted.

◇

3 room left before the exit. The viscount has been shouldering the viscount's daughter this whole time. Should I carry her in my back? I suggested that, but it was rejected.

The problem is the next room. Like a dungeon made by a bad GM, located in unavoidable position is a monster house.
Leading the pack is a level 35 demon, then level 30 Skeleton Knight, Skeleton Deathschyte and Skeleton Warrior. The others are level 10-15 regular Skeleton Soldier.

Should I job change to masked hero?

Checking on the map, the handsome middle-aged priest is 10 rooms apart from here. I intended to join up with him, but the viscount's daughter exhaustion is extreme. Furthermore, each room is inhabited by 3 monsters from undead type. If we are to join up then the breakthrough would probably requires 2-3 hours.
If we manage to breakthrough the next room then the next after would be a vacant room with no enemy but...

Liza and Tama who were sent for scouting come back.

"Lots of bones～"
"Something spherical with wings is flying in the room. The others are

approximately 20 skeleton monster. I think it's better to search for a detour..."

It's a sound assessment, but the exit is just ahead~
Well then, it's time to exhibit my special deception skill! ...orz.

2-12. Labyrinth of Demon (5)

Satou's here. It's hard to make people believing something that I don't believe myself.
A little bit more until the exit.
I want to get back to daily life asap.

◇

"The exit is probably after this. I have two reasons, first, there's a demon who, up until now, was nowhere to be seen. The other, the number of enemies is clearly different than anything before."

Those reasons sure are weak eh~

"...Why do those reasons mean that the exit is just up ahead, I can't understand."
"How about we take a detour as suggested by that demi-human instead?"

You're absolutely right... however! It's my turn now!

"Viscount-sama, did you forget? This is a labyrinth made by demon. They would put their kind in the place where they don't want to let people pass."

Dang, I should've used this reasoning from the start.

"But we are completely outnumbered. I don't think we can beat such large crowds just by ourselves."

I know right~

"Of course we have a chance... That is with the magic of viscount-sama."

I haven't seen him use it even once, but the fire storm used on the demon on the square back then was flashy. It should be enough as a shield.
Oops, I shouldn't have known about the magic of the viscount.

"As you may know, the undead kin are weak to fire. Moreover, I've heard rumor that says viscount-sama is the best fire magician in the earldom."
"Umu, because even like this, I'm the vice-captain of the magic soldier troops."

The viscount doesn't seem to wholly against the idea. So he's a superior of Zena-san huh?

"Viscount-sama, I have a question for the sake of strategy planning, how many time can you use fire storm?"
"The limit for fire storm is one use. After casting fire storm we can block the entrance with fire pillar and wait."

Fumu, is it a magic with bad fuel consumption?
It's convenient that the talk has suddenly progressed to doing the battle.
When the view is obstructed by the fire storm, I'd just exterminate the enemies with coin attacks.

>[Strategy Skill Acquired]

◇

Viscount Belton's fire storm is raging.
The winged eyeball uttered something in the distance but the battle started without anyone hearing it.
Surprise attack is basic.

"Pochi, Tama, throw stones at enemies who's approaching. Liza, thrust the enemy who passes over the stone throws."

I give commands to the beastkin girls.

Now then, let's smash them before the fire storm disappear.

I hit the center of eyeball of the winged eyeball with the last piece of holy stone. I don't know what to say to that huge exposed weak point. The holy stone penetrates the demon, smashing the bones on the back, hitting the wall. The roaring sound was masked by the fire storm's sound.

One set of several copper coins are used to destroy 3 high level skeleton monster. Coin shotgun it is.

When the fire storm subside, only 7 small fry skeleton monsters with half their health points remain.
For now, let's push the achievement.

"Wonderful viscount-sama. Weakened by the fire storm, the skeletons become brittle and were destroyed one by one with the stones throwing."
"Fumu, the filthy undead monsters were purified by my flame magic."
"That's exactly right, this is the first time I've seen such enormous magic, what a tremendous fire power!"

The viscount with triumphant look along with Nidoren-shi and his praise. I leave him to attend for the viscount's mood, and follow after the clean up of the small fry (hereafter, zako) skeletons with the beastkin girls.

Liza attack the feet of a zako skeleton to destroy its balance, then Pochi and Tama strike together to destroy it. Hiding behind the fire left on the ground, I destroy the skeletons with copper coins. I think it's because of throwing skill, the zako skeleton's health is easily depleted by just flicking a copper coin with my thumb ...Is there no rejection skill (Shidan). Even though it's cool.

>Title [Undead Slayer] Acquired
>Title [Demon Slayer] Acquired

◇

Soon the clean-up of the zako skeletons end, we head toward the exit. Since

it'd be troublesome if monster reinforcement come, I leave the magic cores behind.

The passage is different from what we've passed so far, the floor is made by paving stones like the one found inside the room. The passage is 4 meter wide, 3 meter high. Thanks to that, it's bright. The passage continues in a straight line for a while, and break into a curve before the last room.

"The outside's smell, nano desu~"

Pochi reports happily while running around me in circle.
I've become considerably accustomed compared to the first time.

"Let's eat something delicious when we get out."
"Meat~"
"Meat meat~"

Since Liza is in the very back she didn't enter into the conversation, but Pochi and Tama look so happy.

Reflected in the radar, numerous lights appear in succession in the last room.

However, it's not red light which indicates enemy but white light which indicates neutral position instead.
It's probably the territory's army.

The handsome middle-aged priest has reached the skeleton room earlier too before I know it. What kind of trick did he use?

Well it's good either way.
I feel like drinking cold beer and taking a shower right now. Though it's probably unrealizable.

"There are people's voices~"

Pochi said that while pointing the front.
The passage turn is coming into view. After 3 turn from here, it's the exit.

"The wall on the front~ is strange?"

Tama reports. I confirmed from the map that there's a pit behind the wall. Maybe it's like the labyrinth shortcut gimmick in a game.

"There's a hidden door here too. Do not touch it."
"Ay!"
"Yes! nano desu~"

When we're passing through the hidden door...

Beast arms break through the hidden door!

I kick the door's fragmented pieces while an enormous body comes into view!

I push both Pochi and Tama to the edge of the passage.

I also want to jump out but if I carelessly avoid, it's certain the three on the back will meet harm's way. I catch the beast, killing its momentum, then it kicks the floor. The beast's jumping power is heavy and powerful, it quickly pass overhead the three to land behind them.

They finally catch up with the unfolding event.
Screams raise. Groan voices. All are overwritten by the roar of the beast.

It's the reappearance of the Undead Beast thought to have been dealt with. No, it has two horns, different beast huh.

Leaving that aside, what to do?

It climbed all the way up the pit, it's impossible to deal with it like before. Since there's level difference, if I ask the cooperation of the beastkin girls, they could die.
I'd like to ask for the viscount's magic help like on the bone hall, but his magic power is insufficient...

My thought is racing while avoiding the biting attack of the Undead Beast.

"■■■■ ■■ ■■■ ■■■■ Air Hammer"

A mass of invisible compressed air come from the exit's direction forcing the Undead Beast to retreat.
I was rolled up with it.

Undead Beast, seemingly in effort to reduce the magic's force, jump back to near the room's entrance in the back.

The door there opens, and the handsome middle-aged priest comes out of it.
What a bad timing.

"Get back to the room, it's the Undead Beast!"

Thanks to the Loudspeaker skill and the echo in the passage, voice louder than I thought comes out.

The handsome middle-aged priest begin casting spell without panicking.

Ridiculous!

You'll die in a blink of an eye before you even finish the casting.

The Undead Beast turns around after hearing the chanting.

Can't be helped, let's change its target to me and play the avoid war. Then let's defeat it with a strong attack slipped in the middle of the priest's magic.

"■■ Purification (Turn Undead)!"

Short. What's that.

The undead beast stopped moving, and turn back into a stuffed animal.

It can't even stand up on its own, the menace is gone.
GJ, handsome middle-aged priest-san.

"Satou-zannn~~~~"

Before I turn toward the voice, I'm quickly pushed. By Zena-san equipped with leather armor.

"It's good that you're awightt~~~ It's good~~~~"

Rubbing her head on my chest, she's delighted for the reunion.
The magic earlier was Zena-san's huh. From the other side, soldiers begin to appear, helping to rescue the viscount.

The beastkin girls are coming to my side, but they're standing by in a place a bit far. Liza put Pochi and Tama who tried to come here in check.

"I'm home, Zena-san."

Zena-san scrubs hear tears and lift her face.

"Welcome back, Satou-san."

The smile of tearful Zena-san looks awfully attractive.

Death March

- Volume 3 -

3-1. To Daily Life

Satou's here. Not wanting to experience the real dungeon attack again, Satou's.
The arm demon who's missing with the appearance of the labyrinth is on my mind but...
For now I'd like to enjoy a peaceful life for once.

◇

We've come into a vacant lot about as wide as a school yard when we come out of the labyrinth.
Surrounding the edge of the lot, are two-meter high fences. It look to be hastily made.
Since the outer wall can be seen from there, it seems that this is the square where the commotion was.

Looking back at the labyrinth's entrance, it's a 3 meter high of sharp jet black rock with a hole. I wonder if it's made of obsidian?

There are 3 turrets 50 meters away surrounding the entrance. Wooden barricades with sharp pointed tips lined up on the places where they don't obstruct the turrets' line of fire.

"Satou-san, come here please."

Zena-san is calling from a tent across the fences.
When we reunited, Zena-san hugged me without letting go, but her co-worker, Lilio, who was late, teased her so she jumped out in panic. ...She was definitely very worried. Did she favor me that much~?

While Pochi and Tama hanging on both of my hand, we go toward the tent.
Liza follows 3 steps back from me. Are we a master and his pupil.

I give our luggages to the woman official on the entrance and go inside the tent. Liza didn't want to leave her spear, but once I urged her, she reluctantly let it go.

The inside of the tent is unexpectedly wide. It's about as wide as a school classroom.
The handsome middle-aged priest who got out earlier is inside, being questioned by officials while getting medical treatment.
The viscount and his daughter aren't here. Are they on another tent?

Since Zena-san beckons me, I head to her.
The handsome middle-aged Garleon priest, Nebinen-shi and the slave trader, Nidoren are also over there.
<TLN: FINALLY, can we stop using his title now please author?>. The last person is a gray haired knight with bulging muscles and metal armor. The knight looks over here, and laughs. His expression looks like a mischievous boy even though he's already middle-aged.

"Hoo, so you're magician Zena's dearest."
"N, no."

Zena-san attempts to cover and deny the knight's word, but the knight ignores it and continues.

"She was haggard until your safety was confirmed you know. If her squad didn't watch over her, she was sure to jump into the labyrinth alone, it was that dangerous."
"That, for all the trouble I've caused, I'm very sorry."

I think it's a bit strange for me to apologize, but it's better than being awkwardly silent.

"Hahaha. You don't need to apologize. I just want to look at the person who got the straight laced having-no-interest-beside-magic-training to fall."
"L, like I said I don't..."

Zena-san tries to intercept again, but in the middle of the way, she begins to murmur her words and hangs her head while looking really embarrassed.
Experiencing romcom in this age is painful ...No wait, my body is that of 15

years old.
The knight looks at Zena-san amusingly, places his hand on his chin, and turns his head to me with appraising gaze.

"However, even though he does look nimble, to be able to break through a labyrinth with such small number of people, even a great man can't dot that."
"If the girls weren't there, far from escaping, I'd have been in the belly of a monster by now."

And so I said that to make a good impression of Liza and co. Pochi and Tama who are quietly crouching beside my feet look up curiously, I pat their heads to deceive them. Liza quietly bows but wisely chooses not to say anything.

"They sure looks strong. I would like to make them my subordinates if they weren't demi-human."

This knight, even though he looks like a nice-guy who doesn't care with racial difference, the discrimination against demi-human is really deep-rooted~
I respond while smiling wryly.

"They're good comrades who've been together with me though."

"Fumu, if they weren't, it'd be impossible to break through the labyrinth. I'm sorry, this territory's people are always at odd with demi-human tribes, so they're incompatible no matter what."

So it wasn't just simple prejudices but disputes between race huh... no wonder it's deep-rooted.

"Commander! The preparation is complete."

A woman who wears magician-like robe call out.
What preparation?

There's a lithograph put on the pedestal. Yamato stones again after 3 days huh? It's bigger than the one I've seen back then.

Commander-san calls out people who has escaped from labyrinth with loud voices.

"I know that this might be rude, but everyone who has escaped from labyrinth need to be checked with this Yamato stone. This is the original Yamato stone specially loaned from the earl. Even abnormal status will be displayed. This is for the sake of proving that no one is possessed by the demon."

Everyone initially looks displeased, but they become quiet after being told that it's to find out whether they're possessed by demon or not. Since everyone here saw the moment when the demon arm came out of Uusu in the square back then.

Still, leaving my level to 1 and no skill even though I've broken through a labyrinth is bad.

It's been a while since I operate the menu with thought, I open the exchange tab. Since the beastkin girls are level 13, let's make me a bit lower at 10. Make the skills merchant-like with [Arithmetic] and [Estimation]. Would it be strange to have no battle-related skill? Let's put [Avoid] then.

◇

When my turn come, I put my hand on the Yamato stone. Yep, the stats has been updated with the previously set information.

"Indeed, the [Nimble Merchant] huh."

"...You heard that from Zena-san right?"

"That's right, you know well. Still, even though you're not a soldier or an explorer, to have that level at that age, you must've been through a lot."

"It's not that amazing."

Humility? It is.

In fact, this person is level 30 at 29 years old. Being level 10 at 15 years old is nothing to brag about. Is it because that it's hard to level up beside for combat-related professionals?

Small shouts are raised from behind.
They seem to be surprised that a slave is so high leveled at level 13 and even has 4 skills.

Liza is wearing a hard to read expression like always, but her tail is twitching a bit. She's probably a bit proud.

Next is Pochi. Since her hands didn't reach, Liza lift her up from behind. She looks really happy having her hands and feet loose in the air.
The Yamato stone official tells her to place her hand. Shouts bigger than the time with Liza are raised. For 10 years old to be level 13 is probably amazing. Her skills are 4 too.
Pochi's tail are waving with a buzz. She looks over here and make a noise with her nose.

The last one is Tama. Just like with Pochi, Liza lifts her. Did she also want to have her hands and feet loose in the air? she looks really happy her tail swinging on Liza's legs.
When her stats are displayed, the shouts are quieter than the one with Pochi. Her stat is as good as Pochi, but since it's the third time already, the surprise factor is already fading. Tama looks dissatisfied.

"It must have been hard to train demi-human slaves to that degree."

"It's not that much. Because the girls are excellent."

It's true that I struggled, but the girls' excellences is a fact too. Although I wouldn't die even without them, I would undoubtedly have an unpleasant time with the traps.

The inspection with Yamato stone end with Tama's turn.

It seems that everyone except Nebinen-shi who's in deep talk with the white-haired official is allowed to go home.

"Now then, since the inspection is done, is it fine for us to go home?"

"I'm sorry, I'd like to hear the time when the demon appear from you for a bit more."

◇

Me, Zena-san, and Nebinen-shi, the three of us tell the event which unfolded until we were swallowed up by the labyrinth in detail to the commander and white-haired official.

I was embarrassed when Zena-san excessively praised me for the handling of Uusu. Even Nebinen-shi concluded that I've subsided the possibility of rebellion and dealt with the agitator inside the crowd... Well, it's the truth though.

Since I remember the words of the demon when we got into labyrinth better, Nebinen-shi passed it to me to convey.

"For the sake of full revival huh..."
"I don't know how much magic power is needed for demon's revival, but here is close with the dragon line."
"Right, since it's near the earth veins... Even then, it would still take several months right?　Before that let's call high level explorer clans from the labyrinth city, Ceribila, and bring it to an end."

Yup, lots of unknown words making it hard to follow the story. On the side, Zena-san who's clenching her fist is nodding with serious expression.

Let's summarize the words that I understand for now, it's fine to leave the demon alone for a few months, before that, defeat it by calling the high level explorers? It's like that, OK?

After that, what kind of monster appear in the labyrinth? How many of them appear at the same time? What kind of traps are there? various things like that were asked.
I only report half of the battle we've been but I don't hide the type of enemy

of who came out.
At first it was just common fact checking, when the story arrived at the time we meet viscount Belton just before the bone hall, the official's face became strange.

"What's wrong?"
"No well~. Did you really fight that many battles without a spellcaster? Furthermore judging from the time the labyrinth appeared to your escape, each battle's time is really short I think? Did you properly take breaks?"
"Of course. Since we're not machines."
"Yeah, of course you are." (Most likely Zena)
"Yes, we took 3 rest, each for about 3 hours."
"It doesn't look like you're just bragging."

Huh? Did I make a mistake?

"It must be a party with exceedingly good cooperation. You did well not to get annihilated fighting to the bitter end even with that high pace."
"That's right~ If even one people incur serious injury, you'd have been annihilated... If I was with you then I could have became the role of support or healer."

Ah, Zena-san's eyes begin to turn teary.

"Along the way, we've found an alchemist hideout, and we found a lot of magic potions. It's partly thanks to that~."

I'll sully myself to stop a girl's cry. Deception skill come on~.

"Umu, as expected if there were no means for recovery, that many battles would have been impossible."

Yep, we went through hardships.
Whenever the beastkin girls were about to surely got hit, I immediately dash and parry the attack. If they are about to get surrounded, I aggro the enemy.
I really want provocation skill. Let's try to see if I can get it or not next time.

◇

Oh right, I should confirm it before I forget.

"Um, can I ask something?"

"What would that be? I don't mind as long as it's not military secret. By the way, my daughter is 15 years old with beautiful buttock and very popular."

What is this person saying? Let's magnificently ignore!

"It's about the labyrinth, I think it's spreading considerably. Is it fine to just let the labyrinth spread out like this?"

"Oh, did I not explain it?"

You did not.

"The labyrinth won't spread to anywhere beside to the outer wall of this square. I can safely declare that there is no danger of the city collapsing."

"I want to hear the reason for that safety if possible..."

"Umu, right. The army, collaborating with the town's magicians and alchemists have set up barrier. A consecration ceremony involving all the town's temples is being held. With this double shields, the labyrinth has been restricted from encroaching the city's underground."

I see.
Still, I thought the temple and magicians look like they're on bad term.

"I understand what you're thinking. For the temple and magicians who are in bad terms to cooperate together so quickly, it's because of the earl's edict. Even so, this quick isolation of the labyrinth is thanks to the fast report of magician Zena."

"That was thanks to Satou-san giving priority to reporting."

Then, me and Zena-san's concession and credit passing continued, but the white-haired official and the commander skillfully dealt with it. If left alone, I don't know how long it would continue... GJ white-haired official.

"That's why, As long as the barrier is seriously maintained, the labyrinth won't endanger the city. Have you understand that?"

"Yes, I'm relieved."

What a relief. Since I'm afraid if the inn collapse while I'm asleep!

3-2. Master of the Beastkin Girls

Satou's here. Even though slaves are common here, still not getting used to it, Satou.

It would be hard to spread fundamental human rights on this world.

I don't have any intention to do so though ...

◇

After several sessions of questions and answers, we're finally released.
The onee-san official who was given our luggages passes it back to us.

"The things over here are fine to take back. However, the magic cores over there will be bought by the earl."

Can I deny it? I tried to ask, but she answers me back with a [No] and a smile.

"Since we can't completely confirm the safety of this monster's meat, we will confiscate it. And since this spear is made from monster's part, we can't allow you to carry it on the town."

Liza over-reacts to that and turns over here. T, the rarely mad Liza, is angry?
Since she seems to really like it, let's negotiate for her.

"Since that spear is powerful, couldn't you ask a person with appraisal skill to check for any danger? Of course, I will bear the cost for the procedure, but could you give it back when it's finished?"

Liza, you're scary. Scary. Look, even the onee-san's smile is cramping.

"I, I understand. I'll arrange it. The new custody receipt will have to be issued and will be ready by tomorrow afternoon, please bring this temporary receipt to military post then."

"Yes, I'm counting on you."

That's right, let's ask about the treatment for the beastkin girls.

"Um, I have a question if you may..."

It's about the beastkin girls.

"...I see, the slaves' master was dead so you took care of them, and brought them out of the labyrinth is it?"

"Yes, that's right."

Liza also nods. Pochi and Tama lean against Liza feet listlessly ...Bored, are they?

"If it's like that, then these demi-human slaves are yours."

Is that so? I thought of buying and releasing them if they were brought to slave traders though.

"If slaves' master is dead in a labyrinth, except for the murderer, anyone who found the slaves will take their ownership, just like lost item. Therefore, customary and legally, you are these slaves' master."

Onee-san writes something on a certificate, and presents it to me.

"It's a certificate which claim that you're the master of these slaves. Since this is only valid within the town, it's better to make official contract on the slaves traders on the castle's plaza as soon as possible. It's not enough for thanks for the large quantity of magic core we've received, but there is no fee for it."

I receive the certificate and give my thanks to her, and along with the beastkin girls, we get out of the tent.

Oh yes, since the magic cores are used as materials for the labyrinth isolation barrier, we're obliged to sell them.

◇

Outside, Zena-san and the three noisy girls from back then are discussing something.
It's bad to disturb their work, but for them to only nods for my greeting is rather cold...
While thinking what's happening, Lilio grins and pokes at Zena-san while laughing, then she points at me.
"Good luck~", While receiving Lilio's support, Zena-san is coming here.

"Satou-san, I see that the procedure is complete. Are you going back to the inn after this?"

"Yes, I'd like to have the slaves rest at the inn too."

"You're really kind. Though, I guess even the stable's barn is more comfortable than the labyrinth's floor."

...Huh? There were some strange words mixed in.

"No, I wouldn't make comrades who stuck together in hardships with me to sleep in the barn. I intend to reserve proper room in the inn for them."

"Umm. Satou-san. There is no inn who will allow demi-human to lodge in this territory you know. If the master stay in the inn then the slaves will be put on the stable's barn..."

Are you serious?　I thought it's just disagreeable at best, that they would let it if I pay more.
Since Zena-san looks so sorry, it doesn't seem to be a joke.

"Zena-san, you don't have to put that face. Thanks to you, I won't dispute it on the inn."

She still looks sorry, but I keep saying to don't worry about it.
Since Zena-san and her group are going to be on watch here until midnight, I thank them for teaching me and get out of here.

◇

Even so, if I didn't get the information from Zena-san beforehand, and is told to put the beastkin girls on the stable, I would probably get out of Gate Inn.

Should I buy a house? Or do I get out of the earl's territory?
It's different from when I first got here, I met Zena-san and many acquintances in this city so I'm starting to get attached to it. Although I don't intend to stay permanently...

On the way back, let's go to the worker's guild and ask Nadi-san if she's able to arrange for buying a house.

"Master, it's presumptuous of me to say this, but we're satisfied just sleeping on stable's barn. Since we slept on the outside ground under the roof before..."

"That... even for slaves, that's some excessive abuse."

"I'm sorry."

Why is Liza apologizing? I want to hear the reason.

"No that, I didn't want for master to make that face... I want master to not worry even if we sleep in the barn, but my vocabulary is not enough..."

"So that's it, you were taking me into consideration. Thank you."

Pochi and Tama who are dangling on my hands are pulling my sleeves.
I look at where their finger point, a girl wearing one-piece clothes seems to want to talk. A short stick is held in her hand. A spell-user huh?

"Can I help you with something?"

"Yes, how about some junction magic?"

Is it like the junction healer in MMO?

"For treating injuries?"

"Full treatment is impossible~ how about hemostasis and cleaning? It's refreshing, and if you don't clean your wounds then the meat will rot you know~? Ah, and if you're tired, then I can also use invigoration magic, although it's a bit expensive~?"

"How much is the hemostasis and cleaning?"

"[Soft Wash] and [Dry] set is 12 copper coins. One performance of [Bandage] is 3 copper coins."

Fumu, I guess there's no need for hemostasis. Since any wounds were immediately treated with ointments.

"Then, please 4 sets of Soft Wash and Dry."
"Eh? The demi-human slaves too?"

The spell-user girl is surprised with wide-eyes.
She's counting with her fingers with a pensive look.

"Err~ 40 copper coins and 3?"

"It's 48 copper coins."

Even though you can use magic, can't you do mental arithmetic? Since it looks like I have to pay in advance, I give her 3 silver coins.
The spell-user girl began to calculate by writing on the ground... Are you serious?

"1 silver coin is equal to 20 copper coins."
"U~, I know that, I'm properly calculating now because I know!"

The girl furiously calculates with one hand on her head. After a while, she finally finishes the calculation, and gives back the 12 copper coins change.

"Thank you for waiting~ Well then, let's quickly start~!　To keep the small children stand still, please hold their shoulder well, okay."

I wonder if it's in the manual for this regard, even with demi-human, she's being careful to be polite.

Pochi and Tama who were surprised with Soft Wash tried to get away but I grabbed them as not to move.

When the Dry spell begin, Pochi who seems to be feeling good looks happy, enjoying the drying sensation. In contrast, Tama looks even more displeased than the time with the wash, and tries to get away from Liza who hold her shoulder.

"Thank you, I feel really refreshed now. Do you always perform the magic around here?"

"Today there are a lot of people who look like they've played around in mud coming out so I went to get some extra income. But I'm usually going around some brothels. The income is good since a lot of people there want refreshment."

I see, that's certainly true. She's sharp.
After I tell her that we're the last group of the people who played in the mud, the girl goes back to her usual routes.

◇

The day is coming to an end, I guess it's fine to take the official slavery contacts tomorrow.

While thinking about that, I bought 4 serving of delicious looking skewered meats.
Is it goat meat? The meat tastes a bit quirky but the green powder which

tastes like pepper stimulates my appetite.
The beastkin girls are eating frantically, hagu hagu sound effects seemingly coming out. Come to think of it, the time with the grilled frog meat was amazing too~.
Even the usually restrained Liza, become intense when it comes to meat. Seeing her tasting the meat is a sight for my eyes. Her bashfulness when she realized that she was observed is good too.

When the day is becoming dark, the lamps on the main street are being lighted by spell-users holding short canes. Is it just my imagination or there are a lot of people.

Since I don't like to shout when some drunkard tried to touch Liza and Pochi, I buy the three of them hooded mantles. Curiously, Tama skillfully walks without getting herself tangled by anyone.

We proceed through hustle and bustle and find out that a stage has been installed in the square. Various carriages with cages are scattered around on the square beside the stage, some merchants are giving speeches here and there.

...Oh yeah, since yesterday, the slaves auction has started.

3-3. At the Slave Market

Satou's here. There's this so called uncanny relationship, even though I didn't want to, we meet again.
It seems to be fate.

◇

The slave market occupies around 200-300 meter in diameter of the square, bonfires are lighted every 20 meter away.
Just like in a festival, several slender pillar of woods stood, they're connected with string tied with innumerable thin metal plates which glitters from reflection of the lights from magic. If this wasn't a slave market, this fantastical feeling would have been perfect for dates...

A rope is stretched in the place that looks to be the center of the auction. The slaves auction hasn't been started yet, but several musicians on the stage are playing a tune that feels obscene.

We don't enter the square, and just walk along the square's street while sightseeing it.

"Satou-dono!"

Dono? I don't know anyone who call me...
It was the slave trader whom we saved from the spider on the labyrinth, Nidoren-shi. Coming out from a small tent across the the slaves carriage, he's coming here. Girls, who are chained together, are lined up on top of the carriage.

"The slaves on that carriage are the exhibit for auction today. There are are those who have arithmetic and secretary skills among them, how about hiring one, Satou-dono? Since they are all properly educated, they're all virgins, but I can guarantee that no one will refuse for the night time."

...Educated huh.
Oops, rather than thinking the irony, I have other business.

"I'm sorry, but I must make our slaves here go through formal procedure first before thinking of new one..."
"Oya? Do ou want to sell them? If so, please do use our firm! If it's now, you can exchange for beautiful virgin slaves! How about it!"

He sure pushes hard. I don't have the slightest intention though.
...Not one bit, so please don't hold my sleeves while looking up so anxious. I brush Pochi's and Tama's head briskly. I can't see behind, but I can feel Liza being nervous.

"I've said this before, but I don't have any intention to sell them."

Yes, I do want to release them though.
Pochi and Tama relaxes their grip on the robe.

"Is that so, that's regrettable. Then what kind of procedures do you want? It's not about releasing the slaves, isn't it?"
"Since we're still on temporary contract, I thought of doing official one. Do you know the place where the procedure can be done?"
"If it's that then I can do it. Since I have a subordinate who have the [Contract] skill."
"Then, could you do it?"
"Certainly."

We're invited inside Nidoren-shi's tent and offered chairs. He instruct a subordinate man to prepare for contract.
Since the document's content are already fixed, we only need to write the master and slaves name to complete.

"Then, please write your name here. The slaves name are not written, so please put their thumb marks using this ink."

I sign at the place the man directed. The fixed text's lines are [To whom the slaves belong],[Slaves can't injure their master],[Slaves follow their master's order],[Slaves are to maintain their own body], just 4 of those. It's like the three principles of robot, although the last two order are reversed.

When we finish writing the written contract, the contract ritual begins.

"■■■■■■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ Contract!"

What did... he?! Is this magic?
After the last (Command Words) is uttered, the documents burnt and from the ashes a blue light wraps me and Liza in a halo then twinkles for 2,3 times and disappears.

When I look at the man's stat, he certainly has [Contract] on his skill column.
Maybe it's a skill that has only one magic?

>[Contract Skill Acquired]

Alright, let's try if this skill is usable later.

"With this, the slave contract is complete. If you wish, you can confirm the contract on the simplified Yamato stone on the auction center."

After the contract for the three is complete, I wanted to pay the fee, but it seemed that it's Nidoren-shi's authority, so he asked me to wait. Come to think of it, he came out when the first ritual begun. He seem to be back immediately, he sure is busy.

"Thank you, could I ask you something for a bit?"
"Yes, what would that be?"
"Is it rare for a person to release slaves?"
"Right, putting aside the general slaves who have their sentences time decided, I have never seen people who release lower slaves. I've heard story of people releasing slaves who have worked for years, but I have never seen it in person."

Is it that rare?

"It's possible to release them then?"
"Yes it's possible. Except for criminal or war criminal slaves. For those kinds, only state official or senior noble who are allowed to."

"For releasing, is it the same as the contract earlier?"
"That's right. I've done releasing general slaves several times before. With the [Contract] skill earlier, it's possible to annul the contract too."

Since we're here already, should I release the beastkin girls too now?
I can just employ them if they hope for it after the release.

"Master, it's presumptuous of me, but allow me to intrude on the conversation."

Liza who was lowering her head in silent while listening to us begins to talk, I wonder if Pochi and Tama were nervous with the ritual, they're sleeping while hugging Liza's legs.

"It's okay, what is it?"
"If it's no trouble for master, then please don't release us if possible."

She's saying slowly and clearly.
Are you an esper!
Or rather, why doesn't she want to be released? Isn't it better to be free?

"Certainly, in this earl's territory, Beastkin and Lizardkin can't exist unless they are slaves. If they're seen by the army then they would be exiled, there's also a high possibility of getting lynched to dead."
"Yes, furthermore, my tribe is no more, and just like you've heard back then, Pochi and Tama are in similar circumstance."

They can try to rely on their tribes, but for people who have no relatives, they will be treated lower than slaves.
I'm glad that Pochi and Tama are sleeping.

◇

Seemingly to break the heavy atmosphere, Nidoren-shi brings 5 girls in.
The five of them are quite the foreign beauty. They are all wearing thin clothes stopping at the knee. Since it's quite thin, the breast area is transparent.

"Have you finished your contract? Please take a look at them for now."
"Before that, I'd like to pay the fee for the contracts if possible?"

Let's just quickly pay the fee and go home.

"No no, since I was kindly rescued from the labyrinth by you, there is no such thing as service fee. Of course, since that wouldn't be enough, I'll give you 30% discount for the slaves."

Kuh, he made the first move. Giving small benefit first to make you easier to talk into next time, it's the same solicitation technique from some shady new religion.

Since it wasn't possible to refuse, it has been decided for Nidoren-shi to introduce slaves in rotation.
Since I'd doze off if I'm just listening to him, I decided to practice appraisal skill on this occasion. Appraisal is an always-active skill but I need to think [I want to know] or [I want to appraise] while looking at an object, then the result of appraisal will come into my mind.
Since the detail would be displayed on the AR no matter what I do, I turn off other indicators beside radar.

During the rotation of two set of 10 people, I was just half-heartedly replying to give proper responses.
Still, their appeal point were nothing but virgin or their skills, why is that? Do the people of this country love virgin that much?

"Are you tired? Please bear it for a little more, the next one is the last."

So he says while bringing the next set, a black-haired oriental-looking beautiful girl from several days before is mixed among the six girls.
I see, so he brings the best for the last, truly a skilled merchant.
The others are... there. The violet-haired little girl with dangerous-sounding title is there too. Furthermore she looks here. She's really giving a hard look here.
Not matching her gaze, I look at the other girls. A blond freckled 15 years old girl with disgruntled look, a tall brown-haired woman who looks to be in her twenties with oval-shaped face, and a dull blond less-than 10 years

old little girl that looks too thin. A braided red-haired 15 years old who looks like a plain literature girl.

A lot of them looks inferior to the 10 before them. Do they have some kind of special skills?
When I try to look with appraisal, the freckles girl has [Negotiation], the oval-faced woman has [Sex Technique], the thin little girl has no skill, and the braid girl has [Collecting].
While I'm at it, the violet-haired little girl has no skill, and the black-haired girl has [Etiquette].

What kind of line up is this?

"They are all may have inferior looks, but they will work hard for their master."

While saying that, Nidoren-shi explain about them one by one. Subjectively, does he think the black-haired san to be plain too?

"How about it? I could give you 6 set for the price of 3 gold coins if it's now!"

Nidoren-shi is hard at work promoting them. No matter how you look at it, that's too cheap. That mean each is worth two and a half silver coins.

"It's been decided that those who doesn't sell well for today and tomorrow will be brought to the caravan heading to mining city."

Hearing the words of Nidoren-shi, the unmotivated slave girls rustle behind me. The panic begin when I look behind.
Shifting the clothes on the shoulder to expose the breast, rolling the skirt, taking strange pose, everyone tries to appeal with various method. The only two who didn't change are the violet-haired and the black-haired girls. The violet-haired little girl is staring intently like always, while the black haired-girl is downcast.
When the slave girls understand that their appeal isn't working on me, they give up one by one.

Just as Nidoren-shi instruct them to withdraw, the violet-haired little girl regain herself.

"Master! Master thinks that since you have those excellence demi-human slaves you don't need other slave, aren't you?"
"That's right, I don't need other slave."

Particularly, I don't want to buy you who have such trouble-sounding title. Absolutely!

"However, those girls are demi-human."
"That's exactly right, but I'm not dissatisfied with that you know?"
"Yes, just by looking at them, I understand that they're cherished. That's why! Please purchase me."

I don't understand the reasoning.

"Demi-human are shirked in this city. If you only have those girls as slaves then you wouldn't even receive a bread if you make them go shopping."

I see, I didn't think about that before.
However, I don't have to buy slaves just for chores, I'd just ask the maid at the inn. Yep, don't need it after all.

"If I was there, I'd do chores in place of those girls! The price is reasonable too, so please by all means, purchase me."

The violet-haired little girl look up for appeal. Hair that has been cut to shoulder-length, moist violet-colored iris, thin small lips, trembling small shoulders. If I'm into little girl, then I probably wouldn't hold up.

...I guess I'll buy?
Even though I'm not into little girl, I thought that she's charming. No wait, I don't need it, do I?

But, I feel like I absolutely have to buy her.
Then I purchased the violet-haired little girl (Arisa), and per her recommendation, I also bought the black-haired girl (Lulu).

Despite still questioning myself, I become the master of the two slave girls in addition to the beastkin girls.

3-4. Little Girl and Night Turmoil

Satou's here. I think this is an unfortunate fate, to have an inseparable relationship with a person I'm not into.

I'd like to be together with a person of my type for once.

◇

A stark naked little girl is straddling on top of my waist.

...What the heck is this, a dream?

I've experienced similar situation with my younger cousins during a long vacation on my grandfather's home in the countryside, long ago.
The difference is that the little girl who's riding me now is naked, she doesn't have the same innocent atmosphere as my cousins.

The little girl moves bit by bit, then she greatly trembles, and snuggle against my bare chest. Her expression looks more like an adult woman rather than a little girl.

While looking very calm, I am actually really shaken inside. I'm not a lolicon okay? Absolutely!
Yet what's with this situation!

After purchasing the two from Nidoren-shi the slave trader, we were...

◇

"I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night."

The violet-haired little girl--Arisa said such thing during the ritual of contract. Even though Liza et al and the black-haired girl--Lulu were silent, did she want to appeal to me?

After the slave contract is finished, I pay 1 gold coin to Nidren-shi. Until the morning on the day after tomorrow, he'll be on the place earlier so he asks me to call if I ever need another slaves.

We're doing self-introductions outside the tent.

"Then, please let me introduce myself. I am from the now-extinct kingdom of Kubooku, Arisa. My age is 11 years old, there are still 4 years before I become an adult, but I'll gratefully accept to do night service even while I'm clumsy. Please cherish me forever."

While finishing the greeting with fluent words that doesn't match her age, Arisa slightly picks both end of her hem and bows. Although that's an elegant gesture, her hem is already short, coupled with her simple clothes, her lower body parts become almost naked.
And so I put my gaze to her face and simply reply "Please take care of me too, my name is Satou."

"...I'm Lulu desu. 14 years old desu. Born in Kubooku kingdom desu. Since I'm plain looking and thin... I'm not fit to be your partner at night, but I'll work hard like a horse... so please don't abandon me."

Lulu introduces herself while looking down and covers her face with her bangs. That clear voice isn't the type for seiyuu but it's a good voice with soprano feeling. It would have been better if it was not accompanied with trembling.
Though the person herself said thin, she looks to probably be B-cup, being B-cup at 14 years old is quite promising for the future I think, or is this world is of the big-breast faction? As long as it's soft, anything is fine!

Putting that aside, for this beautiful girl to say that she's ugly, that's too much even for humility. Covered with bangs, she looks like Sadako, but if I was to compare her with a beauty contest winner I've seen on TV back then, she would win with a big margin, that's how orthodoxly beautiful her face

is.
Frankly said, she's my type. If her personality is agreeable, then I would think of proposing her when she turns 20.

I wonder if Arisa and Lulu don't have any prejudice against demi-human, even after the beastkin girls took off their hoods, they don't show any disgust. Although Lulu looks afraid of Liza, I don't sense any feeling of disgust. Do people from other kingdom not dislike demi-human?
Pochi and Tama initially act shy around stranger, but since Arisa and Lulu act normally to them, they immediately become familiar.

"Well then, let's get back to the inn."

I call out to the five and we return back to the street. Arisa smoothly and naturally clings to my left arm. The remaining other is being contested by Pochi and Tama. Since it doesn't seem that it's going to end, Liza carry both of them in both of her arms like luggages. Seemingly giving up, the two quiet down after their hand and legs are in the air ...so they like that pose.

Kyurukyurukyu~~.

A cute sound resounded. When I look back, Lulu blushes. Figure of bashful beautiful girl is lovely. I don't think of her as a romantic interest now, but I'm looking forward to the future.

A lot of stalls exude good smells but there aren't many customers. It seems that the auction has started, so the riches and the curious onlookers who want to look at beautiful slaves have flowed there.

Since it's convenient, we go to a stall with tables. I bought chicken soups and flat breads, assorted intestines and vegetables, and enough meat skewers for this number of people. I ended up buying a lot of meat skewers.

"Itadakimasu." and so the meal starts.

After the beastkin girls started eating, the two newcomers follow. Arisa stuffs herself with meat skewers, saying, "Ah~ Proteins after a long time♪" while holding her check. So this world has the concept for nutritions too huh, I ignore that while enjoying the scenery of the meal with everyone.

Lulu eats with all her might while still being reserved. But, the two's eating pace is slow compared to the other four, so they didn't eat much from the big combined platter. Next time, let's divide some small portions for them first.

Since I'm not really hungry, I finished my meal in the middle but since Arisa and the beastkin girls doesn't look like they've had enough, I order for more intestines and vegetables platters.

"Continue your meal as it is, I'm going to buy cloaks and shoes at the stall for a bit."

"L, let me go, if it's for shopping" "I will go"

Lulu and Liza stand up. Pochi and Tama stop chewing at the meat, and look here if only their eyes.

"Everyone keep eating as you are, this is an 『Order』 you know."

I could have gone when the meal is over, but I keep accidentally see Lulu's breast who sit in front of me, I can't calm down. I can clearly see the nipple of Arisa who's sitting beside her, but I don't care with that one.

I give cheap cloaks and sandals to the two, bought from the vicinity.
Soon after, the five eat through their plates leaving not even bread crumbs, so we go back to the inn.

>[Service Skill Acquired]

◇

Just like Zena-san said, the inn refuses to let demi-human enter.
However, Martha-chan makes a bed from new straws inside the barn for the sake of the three, Pochi and Tama are overjoyed and even Liza reservedly gives thank. I wonder if it's warm to sleep on the straw covered with the blankets from the labyrinth.

I take out the cookwares and foods from among the lot bags of the labyrinth, and leave it to Liza. I also put the short swords of Pochi and Tama inside.
It's forbidden to equip demi-human with arms inside the town, but since it's the things taken from labyrinth for self-protection, it's probably fine.
As for the foods, "You can eat if you're hungry okay.", I give permission to Liza. With this, I can wake up late tomorrow (lol).

Lulu is going to sleep here together, since the inn accepts them anyway, it's better to sleep inside the room.

I tried to book an additional room from the landlady but there was no free room, so it was decided to add a spare bed in my room.
Since the room is wide being originally a twin room, even after two beds occupy it, it doesn't feel cramped.

I make Arisa and Lulu to sleep together on the new bed, and I sleep on my own bed.
Inside the labyrinth, for the sake of letting the beastkin girls rest, I was the sole watch guard so I didn't even take a wink of sleep. Is it because of that my eyelids feels heavy.

I surrender myself to drowsiness, and sleep after a long while.

◇

And so we fly back to the beginning.

Why am I sharing a bed with a little girl?!

Calm down Satou! Let's cool down here.

Arisa who notices me wake up says "You're awake?" mischievously while whispering and uselessly kisses me.
While receiving that, I comb her hair...
NSFW?

No, wait! I should have pushed her!
...I'll be branded a lolicon if this continue.

Arisa does not stop with my mouth, she kisses my ear, collarbone and chest in turn. Her small hands lightly, very lightly caress.
Respoding to that, I gently stroke her nape...

Why---! I don't feel like myself.

Arisa captures my hairless chest, putting her check on my thinly cracked abs while her finger is crawling.
Feelng that lovely actions, I feel like it's okay to let her violate... me?

This thought is strange. No matter how you look at it, there's something wrong.

My blurred mind become a bit clear. I operate the menu with thought, and make the log display ON. Found it in the log!

I slowly raise my body, lift Arisa who looks here, and put my face on her nape.
Arisa hugs my head while panicking for a bit...

Close to her ears, I 『Order』 gently but firmly.

"Arisa. I forbid the use of magic and skill. This is an order!"

Arisa loosens her hands, and looks at me with a shocked and distorted face.

"Furthermore, cancel the effect of magic and skill that you've used on me. This is an order!"

The order seems to be accepted, the log shows the cancellation of magic effect. The information displayed on AR changed too.
Just in case, I get the [Mind Resistance] skill which comes out in the log to maximum. It seems that I also got [Mind Magic], but it's fine for now.

"Why..."
"Isn't that my line? Using mind magic on me, what's your goal?"

Yes, the time when I bought her and just before this, she was using magic. The first one was [Charm Person] and [Fret] magic, and a little while ago [<<Temptation FIeld>>] and [Heat Heart] were used.
When I used appraisal skill her skill was [None] but the first time I see her the AR displayed [Unknown]. If only I remember earlier...

"...Even if master said I'm using mind magic"
"I also forbid the act of deceving and playing dumb. This is an order, state your goal."

I close her escape route and press for answer.

>[Questioning Skill Acquired]

Alright, let's allocate point and activate it. Let's make the level to be 3 for now.

"I repeat, don't lie and speak your goal."

She seems to have resigned and answers truthfully. She stops using polite language.

"...my goal was to become master's slave."
"And the goal for the second one?"
"I wanted to serve master."

She becomes a bit sulky while saying it.

"I don't understand the point, talk a bit more clearly."
"Mou! like I said. I fell in love with you when I first saw you. That thin and soft looking black hair! that defenseless expression! That outlandish baby-face! That delicate-looking body! If such a person is to become my master! And even though such dreamy boy was before my eyes, he was going to plainly pass by! I can't forgive that! That's why I used magic! To be purchased!"

She piles up her words like a machine gun. Since she looks a bit desperate, I keep listening.

"So, after you've been bought, you intend to brainwash me then?"
"No! Completely false!　I've said 『I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night』 when I became your slaves right!　That's why I seduced master since it's slave's job to make her master feel good!"

What kind of reasoning is that?　It doesn't look like she's just lying to get through troublesome thing.

"I understand the facade, so what's your true intention?"
"Even though I was waiting for master to call me, you really went asleep... Since it can't be helped, I slip into your bed, and when I see your sleeping face, it's just irresistible～."

It's a tehee face. I'm a bit perturbed so I pull her cheeks. This much punishment is okay right?

"huuwt, it's huuwwt. iuainohahahyanorokirakenihite～."

This thin cheek sure can stretch. It's fun but since the corner of her eyes are tearing up, I stop.

"Even though I did my best to control myself in the beginning～"
"Then was it because you lose to your lust that you attacked?"

"That's right." so she nods.

"Really, just what are you..."

The AR displays these.

Name : Arisa
Age : 11 years old
Title : [Satou's Slave] [Witch of the Lost Kingdom] [Mad Princess]
Skill : [Mind Magic]
Gift (Innate Skills) :
[Self Status]
[Status Check]
[Hide Skill]

[Item Box]
Special Ability (Ability) :
[Never Give Up]
[Over Boost]

Good grief, it's full of skills I've never seen before.

Arisa answers me teasingly.

"I am Tachibana Arisa, just like you, a Japanese."

3-5. The Japanese in Different World

Satou's here. The typical Japanese who becomes so happy when they meet another Japanese in a foreign country, he let his guard down, Satou.

Since we're speaking the same language, and because our sense of value and foundation are close, I become relieved.

◇

"To be exact, Tachibana Arisa as the former Japanese who was reincarnated in Kubooku kingdom with her memory intact. Were you reincarnated too? No, judging from that black hair, you're a summoned hero aren't you? Satou-san?"

The AR doesn't display whether she's a originally a Japanese or her real name, Tachibana Arisa.
Since my stats didn't state if I'm a former Japanese, Suzuki Ichirou too, is it the same situation?

"What's wrong, why did you stop talking? You're the second Japanese human that I've meet."

Hearing that words, my gaze turns toward Lulu who's sleeping in another bed.

"Lulu is different you know? It seems that her great-grandfather was a Japanese man, though I've never meet him, mind. Atavism is a cruel thing. She could have been an idol if she was born in Japan."

"Your mind magic-"It's not""

Did she use mind magic to make Lulu looks ugly, I thought of that but she denied my word.

"This world's sense of beauty think that those who have flat face with thin lips, non-white skin, and small ass as the ideal. She has a lot of those counterpoints. Though thanks to that there weren't many buyers during our slavery days."

The type of beauty change depending on the time and place huh... that's unfortunate.

"So then, Satou-san, are you a reincarnated person or a summoned person?"
"Are there distinctions for them?"

Should I honestly talk or should I keep it a secret?
She's a mind magic user who didn't hesitate to force her way but she's also undoubtedly a clue. If the time comes for it, I can just order her to 『Don't speak of this to other』.

"Reincarnated person is a person who died on their former world, then reborn in this world. Summoned person is a person who is forcibly abducted from their world to this one. Someone like hero is a summoned person."

Though it was an explanation coated with prejudice, I'm neither of those, aren't I?

"Does a reincarnated person always reborn as a baby?"
"There's a legend where they reborn already in adulthood, but in this world a reincarnated person will always be reborn as a baby without fail."

She's very decisive about it. When I try to confirm it.

"Reincarnated persons are told that by the god as they're reincarnating."

So they meet god? If a person is saying such things in Japan, people will doubt his sanity.

"Do summoned persons retain their original appearances? Like their clothes, belongings and figure."
"It seems that the summoned person retain their clothes. And of course, their figures too."

So even their figures are kept, but I became younger, why is that?

"Did you hear it from others?"
"The hero-sama from Saga Empire said so, I don't think it's wrong. Since the only one who could summon heroes from another world is Saga Empire."

Then if I go to Saga Empire, I could find out the way to go home? Let's not forget to check it later.

"I see, but I'm neither of those. I took a nap after works, when I woke up, I was already in a wasteland."
"You didn't see the god?"
"Nope."

Arisa crosses her arms and groans. Put some clothes on already.

"Then, did you get to the summoner's place when you came to this world?"
"No, I was the only one on that wasteland."
"Then were you high-level from the start? Or had infinite magic power? Or got a lot of interesting skills?"
"My level was 1 in the beginning, my magic was also only 10. I didn't have any skills too."

...No, there was that Special Abilty (Ability). Like the Meteor Shower.

"What's with that, impossible game?"

Oops, she's sympathizing with me, what to do if she finds out?

"Rather than me, it's about you. Tell me all your skills one by one. The Gift and the Ability too. Just you know, this is an 『Order』."
"I will tell you even without an order you know."

"First, Mind magic is at level 5. Aren't me quite good?　I've dedicated the skill points I acquired post-birth for this one."

Since it sounds strange, when I check it, the required points to level for each skills are 2-12 point with an average of 7 (Represented with 2d6 in her case), the required point to level up a skill isn't 1 but different values for

each of those skills, it seems that the required point also increases as the skill level increases.
Am I a special case, or is there any specific condition?

"Self-Status is a skill to check my own status. It's more detailed than Yamato Stone. The most important function of this skill is that I can decide which skill I allocate the point I got from level ups."

From what she's saying, she can choose which skill she allocates the point to, it seems that this is a skill that every reincarnated and summoned person always have.
I thought that it's the same special ability that allows me to learn skills easily, but it's actually an inferior version of it instead...

As for the general populace, seems that they have probability to remember skill depending on their training as they level up.
"Status Check is a skill to see other people's stats. It's convenient~. It'd have been better if it was Analyze, but my Privileged-Reincarnation point wasn't enough."

It seems to be a skill which have the same effect as Yamato Stone.
Similar skills are like [Weapon Check], [Armor Check], [Gem Check], [Coin Check], [Plant Check], etc, and the skill that comprise them all is Analyze.
Privileged-Reincarnation is the point that the god gave her when she reincarnated, she says.

"Hide Skill is a skill used to hide your own skill. Once used, even if you were looked by Analyze or Yamato Stone, it'll show 『Skill None』, until it's canceled."

My AR shows [Skill Unknown], which mean that it's from different branch than Analzye, is it?

"Item Box, it's just as the name imply. It's the same kind of storage that usually exist in a game. Though it's not the same as the one heroes get with their infinite storages (Inventory), the store-able number is limited but it doesn't add to the bulk and there's no weight, it's really convenient~."

From what I heard, the item number limit is 100, and it can stack up to 100

piece of the same item. For things that has indeterminate shape, like water, it's counted per liter.
My storage is more similar to the infinite storage (Inventory) one, if I have to compare.

After saying that much, Arisa says "My throat is a bit thirsty.", then she theatrically swing her hand horizontally and recites "Item Box, Open".
In front of her, a black hole open on level surface, then she puts her hand inside and took out a water jug which she drinks directly. Her face seen from the side looks so triumphant.
The water she drink is spilling from her mouth and draw lines on her naked chest, looking inappropriately erotic. How old is this girl inside?

"At least use a cup.", I asked, but it seems putting things in and out each requires magic power to do, so she's minimizing doing those to the lowest. It also works slightly different to my Storage. When she finished drinking water, she wanted to put the jug back, so I let her. How do I say this, if a clueless person saw it, it'll look like someone is putting things inside a black box.

>[Item Box Skill Acquired]

I don't need such inferior version of Storage...
Rather than that, the remaining are [Never Give Up] and [Over Boost], which one of those that let her mind magic to pass over the 300 level differences, I want to know.

"Fufufun, how about it, am I not amazing? There's rarely a slave that has this much skills!"
"Aren't there others too?"

"Ugh" she faltered, "Mou, you're really greedy~" while she pompously hold both her hands up like a gaijin.
<TLN: Gaijin means foreigner, yes I'm just messing with ya (though the author did put that line). :p>
I give a chop to her head.

"I'm against violence! the others are, unique skills, two of them even!"

Amazing isn't it? And since she once again start posing, I'm stroking her head roughly "My hair falls into disorder~", even though she's saying that she looks a bit happy.

"Even Lulu doesn't know these abilities. One is called Over Boost. By using all of my magic power and stamina, the effect of one attack will be raised by many folds? It's exactly the ability fit for a heroine~."

A disposable cannon it is.

"The other one is Never Give Up. It's a power to absolutely never give up no matter how powerful the enemy is! More concretely, no matter how much the level differences or the defense power of the enemy is, an attack or magic will hit with 10% probablity! Isn't it great~."

"However it can only be used 3 times. Once I used them all, it'll recover one for every month. Since my magic did not really work against master, I've spent all three them."

It was probably this skill that had put me under her magic. There are a lot of [~magic resisted] entries in the log, so it's doubtless.
What a troublesome skill. I should be glad that she's not an enemy, is it?

This is something that I heard later, but it seems that even if this skill is in effect, it's useless against an opponent who has complete resistance. For example, the elementary Water Shoot is ineffective against a Great Water Spirit who's immune against water magic.

◇

"There are several things I want to confirm."
"Go ahead~."
"How did you use mind magic without chanting?"
"Umm~n, it's a hidden function of Self-Status, once I remember a magic, then I can use that magic just by reading the last line of the Command Words in my head."

I expected something, but it's a memorization, I really have to successfully chant it at least once. Is there really no shortcut...

"Are you perhaps unable to use magic?"
"I'm failing to properly chant the spells..."

Yep, it's not a lie. I could use two, but those are quite irregulars.

"That's right eh~ I was going to give up when I heard other people's chants too. Eventually I managed to in one and half a year."
"That's right, I've only challenged it for two days, though it's actually two hours."
"What, that's too short~ If one could do it within that period then there would be more magicians."

Since it's getting colder, she's hugging me while saying that but I tear her off me, she falls off the bed and I throw her clothes and the bed cover below.

◇

"I forgot to ask. Who's the first Japanese human you met?"
"Don't use 'you', call me Arisa~."

"Answer me, Arisa."

Arisa unnaturally accumulate her words, and says.

"That's the Saga Empire's hero, Hayato Masaki."

3-6. Hero and the Taboo Girl

Satou's here. Heroes are enough just being in games, Satou who think that.

How many games out there with heroes in them...

◇

"I see, so the second one is the hero from Saga Empire."

I really don't want to get involved with him. If I carelessly got in touch, I could got tangled in demon lord's extermination.

"Yes, with a face that doesn't look like a 18 years old, although he is handsome, and with hair sticking out on his macho body."
"No, I don't care about his appearance, how is his personality?"
"He's a perverted gentleman (lolicon). When we first met, 『YES! Lolita, NO! Touch.』, he loudly yelled that, and then got beaten up by his women attendants."
<TLN: YES and NO are written in alphabet in the original text.>

Arisa said with white eyes.

"Isn't he the same kind as you (shota)?"
"I used to be like that a long time ago, but it's different now!　I'll whisper with all my might that I love boy now!"

Please spare me the whisper.

"...Or rather, since you like boy (shota), isn't a 15 years old outside the scope?"
"Ara! That's not true!　I mean you still don't have an adam's apple, your chin is still smooth even at this hour, and your voice hasn't become strange

right? And　I've seen it just now, even your legs haven't grown with hairs, it's really smooth isn't it!!!!"

Arisa kicks the bed cover, and stands up while roaring.
I can see various things, so please stop doing imposing stance while you're naked. Or rather, put on some clothes already.

"Okay I understand your enthusiasm, but wear something before I order you already."
"Yes, yes, I know."

She's too excited she's gasping when she answers while wearing clothes.
And when you're going to sit back don't do it on my lap.
...I somehow feel like my chastity is in danger.

"The talk strays off to far, I'm not interested with his fetish but his personality."
"Right~ He's a straightforward justice-minded fool, I guess?　If people said『That is evil』, he will directly confront it without even uttering a word of doubt, that kind of type. Originally there was a staff-officer-type glasses-wearing girl around him, but since she was needed in the noble bureaucracy, I don't think she'd participate in the war."

It's a type I'm not good against.
I have a friend who's like that too, those kind of types will drag you into their problem without even hearing your circumstances. I think I always got involved.

"Since he's a hero, he's surely strong isn't he?"
"Seems like it~ I didn't see him fighting, but it seems that he was already level 50 when he got summoned."
"Did you not check his skill when you met him?"
"Of course I did. His level was 61 with point mostly on basic sword and spear skill and a lot of various other skills. If you're interested I could write down the ones I remember for you."
"Ah, I'm counting on you."

I'll buy paper and pen when the dawn comes.

"However, I don't know about his unique skills okay?"
"You couldn't see it even with Status Check?"
"Yep, I couldn't. It seems to be an ability of the holy armor he got from Saga Empire, I don't understand why he didn't hide his skills too then."

Indeed. Is it a problem of cost, or is it deliberate to make his opponents let their guard down?
I guess the reason doesn't matter for now.

"But the person himself gave me a hint. Do you want to hear it?"
"Yes, I do."
"『My unique skills are contradictions』 there"

Like that, it's still useless~ says Arisa while laughing.
If he's like Han Feizi then it's fine, but if our ideas can't match then his ability could be problematic.
<TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_Fei>

Alright, if it seems like we got into a situation where we would fight, let's run with all my might!

◇

I'm at disadvantage at the war on my lap.
Since she looks like a children, it's hard to hit her. Though if she jump on me, I intend to grip and throw her off...
Arisa pretends to be sleepy and leans on me with her back.

"Boy, the things you wanted to hear, is it over?"
"You're breaking your character you know?"

Arisa strokes my chin with her fingers.

"Onii-chan, I'm sleepy. Won't you hold me tight until morning?"
"How sly!"

I scoop her up my lap and roll her over next to Lulu.

"I forgot, since when did you notice my identity?"
"If I have to say, from the beginning."

I'm shocked. I thought I had conducted myself well.

"Since you have that Japanese face, I had an incline from the beginning."
"Isn't that too weak for affirmation?"

"The second one was 『Itadakimasu』. There's no such speech in this world."
<TLN: Thank you for the meal>

Arisa put up two finger while talking.

"The third was 『Protein』. Nutritions only come out in a few books since the era of Yamato-san, most people don't know about it. Furthermore, I said 『Protein』 fully in Japanese, but you ignored, didn't you?"

I was careless...

"And the fourth."
"There's still more?!"
"The next one is the last. When the thing about me being a Japanese came out, weren't you upset? You should have set a poker face and asked back, what's a Japanese? instead."

So I was completely caught in her bluff...

"I'm sorry, actually there's one more."

She points at my trunks, "A trunks made from synthetic material with a washing tag attached, there is absolutely no such thing in this world", and she laughs.

◇

"Next, tell me the contents of your item box. It'd be bad if I was killed when

I'm asleep if you take out knife or poison from it."

I'm not forgetting to check for potentially dangerous situation.

"Umm～　『Mind Magic』 related, five magic books."

She piles it up on top of the bed.

"If you've sold this books, wouldn't it be enough to buy yourself back?"

"Slaves belongings, if taken, it's the end. Besides, if they knew that the writing is about the detested mind magic, I don't know what they'd do..."

"Isn't it better to learn other magic?"

"Only this was available. If there were magic I wanted to know, I had to learn it by myself."

I know that feeling well.

"The remaining ones are just the water jug from a while ago, and various clothes, do I have to take them out too?"

"Ah, take them out. You don't have to for the water jug."

I got a headache after seeing the clothes Arisa took out. Yukata, sailor uniform, and unfinished maid clothes... It seems that they're all hand-made. She doesn't have tailoring skill but it was her specialty before reincarnating.

I take memos for only the titles of the magic books, and allowed all the things back to the item box.

"You won't take it?"
"I want to read the magic books next time, but I don't have any intention to take them."

I tell the slightly dubious Arisa clearly.
I'd be treated as a pervert if I carry around little-girl-sized sailor and maid uniforms after all.

◇

After pulling myself together, I ask for the last question.

"Why did you make me buy not only yourself but Lulu too?"
"Since she's my older sister. Lulu is my half-sister."
"That's why you want to be together huh..."

Arisa goes to the bed and pat Lulu's hair, while looking sad, she talks.

"It's not just that. Master won't scorn Lulu despite how she looks right? Even in our hometown, servants were talking about how ugly she is behind her back."
"Even though she's this beautiful..."
"I think so too. Moreover, I was in the same situation. Don't you think that my violet hair and iris unusual?"

Arisa lifts her hair with both her hands and looks here.

"Ah, I haven't seen it beside on some stylish grandma's dye."
"D, don't put me together with such things..."

Arisa becomes crestfallen, but she's immediately back on her feet and continues.

"Violet hair and iris are considered to be bad omens, although there are few people who know the reason, if anything bad happen then they will be accused of being responsible for everything."

Is that why she was unsold? Is her [Witch of the Lost Kingdom] title due to that too?

"Could you tell me the reason why you became a slave? This isn't an order. If you don't want to tell me then you don't have to."

Arisa is at loss for a bit, but pieces by pieces, she begins to talk.

3-7. Past, Failure and Withered Labyrinth

Satou's here. There are many tragedies where the hero doesn't come to save the day.

In fantasy world, I would have liked if it's a happily ever after end.

◇

"I failed to make my hometown prosperous using the knowledge from my previous life."

"Even if I'm like this, I was a princess you know." said Arisa ironically.

"In the beginning it was working well, but then it began to be failing unnaturally and the kingdom became ruined, plunged into civil war, and occupied by the neighboring kingdom in the end."

"What did you do?"
"Just normal agricultural reforms. Like making fertilizers from leaves and manures, four-wheeled farming tools, some basic administration cheats."

I've never heard 'Administrative Cheats' lingo, but I put the pieces together from the administrative and reform parts.

"Even if you fail, could that even ruin the whole kingdom?"
"That's why I said 『Unnatural』. The mountain where we collected leaves for fertilizer died off. A massive insect monsters outbreak came out of fertilizer which was fermenting, planted clovers and turnip which should had restored the land, withered it instead."

Indeed, those were some fantasy-like phenomenons, but if we add 『Unnatural』 to this, that means....

"Someone was interfering, was it?"
"Yes, but I only knew long after the fact. At that time, I thought it was because of the difference between the earth and this world, I was really depressed. I even got called [Witch of the Lost Kingdom], or [Mad Princess]."

So those titles were because of this.
It wasn't because she used mind magic to manipulate the king to create a harem of pretty boys for her or something huh.

"Still, if the intention was to occupy your kingdom, if the neighbor kingdom didn't gain any profit, there was no meaning to it, isn't it? Laying waste to the other kingdom to get it, didn't they get their priority backward?"
"They didn't care at all for territories of a poor country. They probably just wanted the [Withered Labyrinth] below the castle."

◇

"After our country was occupied, they made a public execution of the king and the crown prince for the sake of calming down the populace."

Tears are falling out of her frustrated face.

"Then the remaining princes and princesses were gathered, and they said this."

『This country was destroyed because of your foolishness. You people are not qualified to be royal families.』

"They made the court magicians to put coercion(geass) on the princes and princesses, starting from me."

『Live as a slave until you die』

"I was blaming myself for the destruction of the country, so I willingly received that geass and became a slave."

I take out a handkerchief from the storage using under-bed as a cover, and wipe her tears.

"Why was it had to become slaves..."
"It was for the sake of reviving the 『Withered Labyrinth』 I told you earlier. We couldn't escape if we became slaves, since it was geass and not contract, only a country is able to cancel that..."

She grasps the handkerchief along with both of my hands, and continues.

"Every month, when it was full moon, they sacrificed one person in a suspicious ceremony inside the labyrinth's interior."

"One year later, the labyrinth was resurrected. When the ceremonies were over, only me who had the taboo hair and Lulu, who was an illegitimate child remained. Our confinement was moved from tower to the royal villa near it. I don't know why they didn't dispose of us right away. But we were probably spares if the labyrinth ever to wither again."

Her grips are loosing its strength.

"And then, another tragedy struck when the next full moon happened. A demon appeared, the castle and the town surrounding it were destroyed. The royal villa where we were, was burned down too, I and Lulu ran took refuge to the mountain."

Arisa was forbidden to go out by Order, but when the castle was destroyed, their master seemed to have died in it, thanks to that they were able to escape from the villa.

"I thought that we have no choice but to be burnt to dead but Lulu's indication became 『Master: None』, thanks to that. If I was alone, then I'd have died just like that."

Arisa puts my arms to embrace her and sits on my lap. Since she's trembling a bit in my arms, I let her off.

"Then we just wandered around in the mountain, and just as we were about to die, we got picked up by the wandering slave trader, Nidoren-shi. Since

slaves who don't have master can't enter into towns. So I wouldn't be sold to some perverted nobles, I used Hide Skill to hide my skills and Lulu also pretended to have loss of speeches."

She lean her small head to my arm, her expression isn't visible.

"Wouldn't it better if you used mind magic to make Nidoren-shi to treats you two like daughters?"

"That's right. I was too desperate to hide my skills, when I realized that, I was already under the Contract to be Nidoren-shi's slave."

"You could just use the magic after that."

"I could have died if I was careless trying to do that and violated the contract."

Hmm? Wait a minute.
I make Arisa to face me.

"Didn't you just abuse your magic to push me down earlier? Why was the contract not violated?"

She looks up to me and smiles wryly.

"Because that's a service from a slave. I properly made the oath during the contract, right?"

『I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night』

"That's why I use every ounce of myself, including magic, to service you!"

She puts her hands on my side while looking like expecting something, "So embrace me~, indulge yourself on my unripe body~", while trying to hug me, I shoot her down with a chop.

◇

"By the way, who was that demon?"

"I don't know. I didn't directly see the demon. Only heard it from Nidoren-shi's talk with other merchants. I only knew that the town around the castle was burned down and it went somewhere after. Maybe it came to steal the revived labyrinth."

Is it like the arm demon, gathering power in the labyrinth?
I talk about it to Arisa.

"So the uproar that Nidoren got involved into, was about labyrinth?!"

Her face is close.
Bracing myself, I push back the oncoming Arisa, while talking about the demon raid's disturbance, the arm demon's making of the labyrinth, summarizing them all. The silver masked hero was omitted.

"You mean a new labyrinth was made?"
"Seems like it."

Is it a point to be surprised about?

"There are only 6 living labyrinths in this continent. The last labyrinth which appeared, did so 100 years ago. A labyrinth will appear in the place where the corpse of demon lord is, that's what written in books."

"That arm demon said that it was created for the sake of the complete resurrection, so I thought that it was just a recovery type shelter item."

"It's not such a cheap thing. That's a Legend class artifact item. I wonder what's the objective..."

"To produce demons to fight the hero maybe?"

Ignoring my nonchalant answer, Arisa ponders with serious face.
I'm alright with you hanging your hands on my shoulders, but please stop circling my waist tightly with your legs.

"Are there earth veins around this area?"
"It seems there's one called Dragon's Valley."

She says that with serious face while looking up... Fine, but why are you pressing your thin breast?

"If the arm demon's goal was to recover one arm, then probably it should have been over. I think full recovery would take many months. It could probably move around in its former form in short period."

"And that thing is underneath our feet, chilling~", she's shaking.

I don't know how long is short period, but Zena-san et al who are on the labyrinth's entrance are in danger.

"You're awfully knowledgeable."

Almost like Nadi-san.

"I've read most of the books in the castle's library."

"The letter printing in this world is really small you know~", Arisa outraging.

"Do you know? When you read books and gain new knowledges, you accumulate experience points~ Thanks to that, my level went up even while secluding myself in castle."

I see, this isn't a game after all, you can gain level even without going in battles.

◇

"Tell me if you know this."
"Of course~ Master~."

While rubbing your face against my chest, don't grope it with your fingers.

"In this world, to fight against a level 62 demon, how much force would you need?"
"What are the level of the best pieces you can prepare?"
"Around 48."
"Then if you equip them with 6 holy attribute weapons and the party balance is good, you can win~"
"There aren't 6 of them. Level 48 magician is one person, upper 40 are 3 people, and lower 40 are 2."
"It will be harsh, but if there are 10 level 30 people as back ups in turns, then I think, they could somehow do it. Although there probably would be many sacrifices."

She stops playing with her fingers and looks over here.

"Master, you sure know a lot about this town's forces. Aren't you a merchant?"
"I know an acquaintance in military. Also, although I call myself a merchant, I've never done any commercial business."

"Master can afford 5 slaves regardless."
"Well yeah, I got a lot of magic cores from the labyrinth after all, I won't have money trouble for a while."

The moneys are actually things I pillaged from the dragons, but it seems it'd be troublesome so I just mislead her here.

I grab her hands which were playing around on my chest above, seemingly misunderstanding something, she closes her lips shut and attempts to kiss me.
I push her back, peel her body off me, and lay her beside Lulu.

◇

I put on cheap robe and cloak, and going out of the room.
"Where are you going~", hearing that, "Sleep until morning", I 『Ordered』 Arisa that and got out of the room.

3-8. Masked Hero

Satou's here. I've played around imitating a transforming hero when I was a child but I didn't think that I would really stuck to be one.

◇

I come back to the labyrinth. Covered in blond haired silver masked hero style (lol).
I left the beastkin girls to rest in the inn, so I'm alone. Since Pochi and Tama aren't here I activate the [Trap Release] skill.

Opening the map, I mark the course to where the arm demon should be located.
Alright, with this I won't have to check the map every time I reach a junction.

I proceed for a bit while having the trap discovery skill finds the trap locations. I somehow know where the trap is before the AR indicate it.
I put force to my jump, flying over the trap.

It seems that there are 5 skeleton soldiers in the room ahead. Since pulling out sword is tedious, I just kick them.
The skeleton soldiers are blown away to near the wall in tatters, but they immediately get back up.

"Oh dang, that skill was still disabled."

I open the skill screen on the menu and tap [Fighting]. Not the level but the name. [Fighting Lv 10], the indicator changed from gray to white. I disabled it in order to not beat the people at the downtown back then to death, after I got the abduction skill. It seems that abduction skill has non-killing effect, that's convenient.

I kick an approaching skeleton. The kick hit the torso part blowing it away

like it was shot, and sink it into the wall. The skeleton soldier who has lost its torso pauses for a bit, then it flies backward as if being pulled. Many other skeleton soldiers get entangled and destroyed.
I kick the only remaining skeleton lightly. It doesn't get blown away like it was shot like earlier, but it flies to hit the wall while breaking up.

"I should make sure not to forget to turn off fighting skill before I get back to the town..."

Since it'd take a lot of time if I throughly beat all enemies, I decided to fight only the one who blocks my path.

Jumping over the traps, kicking the enemies around, while galloping through the labyrinth.
I got into the life drain trap once, but it only rob a small portion of my stamina.

However, there's a place where I'm forced to stop my feet.

◇

『Thou hast to answer my question if thy wish to continue』

That's what written on the gate. Riddle huh, this is also a labyrinth classic.

『Shonimu is righting the tree, Dareson is eating the fruit, Yurato is planting the seed. Correct our right position.』

Yep, I dunno.
Therefore I decided to do the brute force way.

I take out a sledgehammer from storage, and hit it. Hit. Hit. Hit.

"Is it no good? No wait, I haven't enabled the hammer skill branch."

I allocate points to [Two-Handed Hammer] skill and activate it.

...I somehow understand that it's useless even if I continue to hit it. Is this an effect of the skill too?

I stop minding about it and swing the sledgehammer with all my might!
The handle breaks, and the tips fly to the other end of the room. The door becomes a bit recessed but that's it.

"This door would be a hot sale if I take it home."

I'm considering to ignore the door and just dig through the wall, but referencing the map it looks like it would take some time to finish.

"Should I rely on magic items with unknown effects?"

The frequency of talking to myself increased.
Unfortunately there is no other way around. I have also checked the pit, but there is none that goes to the other side of this door.

I don't have any choice but to deal with the riddle, but this is the type that requires you to know the preamble first.

"Tree, fruit and seed huh... There are some suspicious looking animal pictures, but there are nothing with trees."

I'm at a loss.

"『What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three in the evening?』, If only it was like that~"

That's right!
I take a pick from Storage, and use it to carve something on the wall.

『What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three in the evening?』

『It's Man』

>[DeRiddle Skill Acquired]

Thank you Sphinx! I don't know the one who answered that, but thanks for you too!

I'm pouring DeRiddle skill with point to the max, and activate it.

Shonimu, Dareson, Yurato, I still don't know what are they. However I knew which of the suspicious looking animal picture correspond to which name. And, I somehow know that the tree, the fruit and the seed aren't in this room.

"Skill get, easy victory~ I thought it'd be like that~"

Despite being disappointed, is this sensation thanks to DeRiddle skill? I understand that there are still more that need to be done to solve this riddle. I don't know concretely how but...

In a game, it's common for key items to be located in different rooms, I search for rooms with strong-looking enemies on the map.
There are 3 blatantly suspicious rooms, furthermore each have enemies clearly higher-leveled than normal.

"Truly game-like eh~"

I try seeing the closest room. The room's floor is depressed except at the center. On the depression, tree root-like creatures are wriggling around. There's a pedestal in the center of the room, a statue is put on top of it. That's most likely a key item for the riddle.

It seems to be impossible to jump to the pedestal with a single leap. That said, I don't want to land on that wriggling things.
The AR indicate that it's called Wandering Roots, since it's a colony life form it looks like even if I shoot it directly with the magic gun and destroy its external, it still won't die, there'll be no end to it.

That's why I use the molotov bombs I made back then. Since I've activated Fire Resistant skill, my body probably would be fine. If the wig got burned, my disguise will be blown, so I pour the water bottle from the top of my head. With this it won't get burned easily.
I ignite the molotov with the igniter magic tools (Tinder Rod). I casually

throw five ignited bottles, and after checking that it's burning nicely, I jump into the fire!

"Like I can!"

Impossible impossible impossible!　Even if I know that my body won't burn, it's still impossible.

Comparatively the live trees are burning nicely. I can see that the smoke isn't coming here, I wonder if there's air vents somewhere?

Since it's tedious to just wait, I check other locations.

The second room is like a square.
In the slightly-lower floor-level in the center, a 3 meter great-majin look-a-like monster is there. The AR indicate that it's a Stone Golem. Level is 40. It has [Physical Damage Halved],[Spirit Damage Invalid] unique skills.

"Standard golem is usually taken care by crossing off the E from EMETH so it become just METH, was it?　There's nothing like that written, the letters itself are different anyway～"

Physical damage halved huh... that mean half of it still works right.
I maximize spear skill points and activate it.
I take out a steel spear from the storage.

After getting a good aim, I throw the spear!
The spear strikes the Stone Golem diagonally, passing through it and piercing through the earthen wall until its base.
A moment later, the stone golem crumbles from the place where the spear pierced through, demolished in single blow.

"It's an overkill～"

There's a blue gem in the mouth of the stone golem. This seems to be 『Fruit』.

The third room is a room with a treasure chest in the center.
Traps are laid all over the room up until the treasure chest location, there's

only one safe path until there.
Though it's already easy as long as it has one.

I hang a black rapier on my waist, safely go through the traps and get in front of the treasure chest.

"Who~ah, the treasure chest was a mimic!"

Yes, the monster in this room is a dungeon regular, Mimic.
While I equip the rapier, the treasure chest is about to attack by opening its mouth, so I consecutively thrust the rapier. It feels like destroying a furniture rather than a living being.

>[Continuous Attack Skill Acquired]

The Mimic evaporates while leaving out purple smoke. I involuntarily step back and my foot almost got caught up by the trap. Dangerous, dangerous.

Underneath the place where the mimic was, there's a black stone. This one seems to be 『Seed』.

When I get back to the first room the fire has been extinguished, thin and white smoke is rising from the cinders.
The Wandering Root has evacuated somewhere, it's nowhere to be seen.

This is fortunate, I collect the statue from the pedestal. This is probably 『Tree』.
It doesn't seem that a boulder is going to crash down even if I took the statue.

I leave DeRiddle skill to place the collected item on the right position, then the door silently opens.
So that the door won't close when I'm going back, I stab a suitable great sword on the floor.

From there, there was nothing worth to talk about until the target room, I ran through.

◇

"This is the place where the arm demon should be..."

If he's not revived then I'm going back to indulge on lazing around~

An altar-looking thing is situated on the depth of the room.
I'm closing on it...

The candlesticks around the altar are suddenly lit with blue fire.

"Fuhahahaha! I appear!"

A magic circle with purple light emerges from the altar along with the arm demon's voice.
On the center of the magic cirlce, the arm demon relaxedly rises, no, its whole body has been revived.

"Muhha~~! In perfection I, am revived!"

"As usual, what an idiotic way of talking."

"Mumumumu! You bastard! Silver mask! I, struggle!"

The demon roars, and black aura is rising from its body. It seems to be some kind of support magic. The AR indicates that it's [Physical Damage 90% Cut].

"Unpreparedness is one's greatest enemy! I, do my best!"

The demon roars again. Purple lights are emitting from its nails, horn and tail. The AR indicates that [Physical Attack Power 300% Up].

"Is it fine now?"

I put the sheath of holy sword on my waist while listening the demon. I wonder if it's also called sheath for western swords?
<TLN: Koiguchi 鯉口>

Returning my consciousness which went astray to the demon.

"For showing that allowance, it's my turn now! I, dash forward!"

The demon attacks while dashing!
While leaving purple afterglows, the demon stab the poisonous claw with its right hand, but I duck from the attack and counter with iai flash, slashing from the bottom up.

The blue light track is beautiful like always.
The holy sword tears through the meat smoothly without any resistance, severing the bones.

"Gunununu! I, unyielding!"

The demon who has its arm cut, use the rotating tail to strike instead. Come to think of it, I was blown away by this tail the first time.
If I don't let my guard down, this isn't a problem. I cut the tail with a single stroke of sword.

"No way! You bastard! You must be a hero! I astonished!"

The demon shows its back after using its tail to attack, I cut it into three pieces from behind...
Yep, I'm alright. After defeating so many insects, I got accustomed to it.

"This can't be! Mao-sama... I, regret..."

After making sure that the demon's HP is 0, I collect the cut tail and arm and put them on the main body. It's troublesome if it resurrects again like before. Let's cremate it.

I set fire by throwing the rest of the molotov bomb to its body from a bit far. I monitor the corpse until it's burned down from a place away. Probably because its existence is already thin, it has been burned out leaving only ashes in only 5 minutes .

Having finished my business in the labyrinth, I leave it behind.

>Title [Labyrinth Traveler] Acquired

Intermission: Zena

The invoked magic wraps my body.

Even though it's a sensation that I'm familiar with, right now it's irritating.

To confirm the effect I take a step forward.

Okay, it is working properly.

Together with the wind.

I am running.

◇

I met that person yesterday. Even though it has not been even a full day yet since then, I feel like it has been longer than that.
I thought that I could defend the demon's attack with my magic, but my body became battered instead. My feet and arms were throbbing in pain, I was like a doll, unable to move.
I slightly turn my neck.
<TLN: Yes, we have entered her reminiscence>

Fortunately, before I slammed into the ground, I was caught in roadside tree's branches somewhere.

...Fortunately? Is it really so?
My life force is going to disappear first before that overly strong demon could be defeated and for someone from the army to find me.

Even now, my blood is dripping out little by little.

My consciousness is fading but I come back to myself when I hear

someone's footsteps. I muster all of the little energy I have left, and turn my sight.
That someone is wearing a robe so gaudy it's hurting your eyes.
I, who was on the brink of death, still think how out of place it looks in daily life.

I want to go back to (that) daily life too!

Even though I feel exhausted looking at that gaudy robe, I call out for him before he's gone. He has a voice that feels like he's going to be carefree wherever he is.

◇

Running.

Avoiding people, avoiding wagon, I am running.

Ahead, even a step.

Faster, even a moment.

I am running.

◇

I wonder if I blacked out, after calling him out, he immediately stands beside me.

It's a very calm-looking boy which you wouldn't think would wear that gaudy robe.
I wouldn't call him handsome, but he's someone who's giving you a favorable impression.

After ascertaining my wounds and dealing with my fractures, he gently, yes,

very gently lifts me up to his arms.

His robe, which looks really new, is dirtied by my blood and dust.
But he doesn't seem to mind those kind of things at all.

Despite his delicate appearance, he has enough power to carry me without looking strained.

I wonder how will he bring me down from the tree?
With magic?

Contrary to my expectation, he flies from the branches without even using magic.

◇

I run through the alley.

Without killing my momentum, I kick the wall to turn at the corner.

I avoid people who are surprised like I'm dancing.

I don't even mind my skirt fluttering around.

I run using every ounce of my strength.

◇

I close my eyes in order to endure the soon-to-come impact.
I hear someone screams annoyingly close to my ears, but it was my own voice.

However the shock never came no matter how long I wait.
When I timidly open my eyes, with worried visage, he tenderly greets me.

He doesn't seem to directly go down below but jumps over a series of branches and go up the roof.
What a nimble person!

Let's call him Nimble-san from now on.

While carrying me, he's ferrying across several roofs, looking for a place to go down.
He was jumping up and down several times, but he was doing it like a weightless feather. As if he has wings.

I wonder if this is what it feels like to be flying in the sky?

◇

I am losing breath.

But I can't stop now.

I was entrusted to call for reinforcement, for the sake of not letting him die.

I am ignoring the scream of my body.

I will let it rest however much later.

Right now I must be faster, even one step.

◇

When we're going through a cramped house, he's being very careful as to not make my fractured limbs touch the furnitures.

I feel like a princess after receiving this much of careful attentions.
A luxurious thing, considering I had readied myself to die just before.

Whenever he avoids the furnitures, our bodies are getting in close contacts.
I've done training with male coworkers before, but he has no beast-like body odors unlike those men. On the contrary, I can faintly smell elegant-like fragrance.
His hair is smooth too. I want to touch that for a bit...

The fight has ended in the plaza. Apparently they won.
I am led by him to receive the medical treatment.

He hands me over to the relief station after the treatment is finished, and goes to rescue other people.
During our parting, he turns around and waves at me once.
I don't know if that was for me, but I feel a bit happy.

◇

It's almost the central main street.

A child suddenly jumps out from the sideway.

I cannot avoid him as it is. I jump over the child, performing a somersault in the air.

I know it's shameless since I'm wearing a skirt, but now it's not the time to be concerned about it.

I leave the child's safety to the adults nearby.

Imposing my feet with unreasonableness for the last time.

◇

On the evening of that day, Lilio and my friends made fun of me when they saw me talking with Nimble-san "Spring finally comes to Zena huh～", they said.

I don't understand love even if you tell me.
Whenever I'm thinking about him, I somehow feel like running in a lap.
If this is really love then I can understand why Lilio, who's a love-maniac, is fast to react.

The next day, I somehow go out with a skirt. There is no particular reason.
Before I go to the temple for treatment, I wonder if I can meet him I go to the bookstore he helped yesterday? I consider that for a bit... This small thought is a secret.

When I really meet him on the bookstore, I feel that this is a fate for a moment.
Am I exaggerating?
Lilio will surely make fun of it, "Children really do like fates eh~", no doubt about it.

He tells me that my unfashionable clothes is "Lovely".
Let's not forget to write the diary when I go home today!

◇

I jump into the central street while rolling.

Running on the street, I'm passing through carriages while grazing them.

I will apologize to the coachman who let out abusive languages later.

Waiting for my breath to catch up is vexing so I recite the wind magic, Whisper Wind.
There should gatekeeper inside the inner wall.

"This is magic soldier Zena speaking! On the east district, purple has appeared on the 13th square near the outer wall."
"Are you using magic? I'm Mondo of the gatekeeper guard unit. Are you certain that it's purple?"

Purple is military term for demon.

We can't exactly shout demon appears in broad daylight.

"There is no mistake, I've confirmed it visually. Please send reinforcements ASAP. I will go back there to help evacuate the civilians."
"W, wait, alone"

Without listening to Mondo-san's last words, I'm going back to the square where Satou-san is.
In the middle of the way, roars and building breaking come from the direction of the square.

My heart tightens, imagining the worst.

It's okay! I persuade my mind.
Nebiren-sama from Garleon temple is there, he is the best holy magic practitioner in this Seryu city. If it's him, even if he can't defeat the higher-demon, he should be able to buy time.

I recast Wind Walk which had its effect expired.

I reaffirm my trembling legs.

To run again.

Going back to that person's side.

◇

I was given a flower as present.
A small winter honey flower which has a gentle fragrance.
I wonder if he knows the meaning in flower language?

We went around the shops Lilio taught me. He is exaggeratively surprised on even the most ordinary things I show him.
It's kind of fun.

The trump card that I reserved from the the thing Lilio taught me was a

misfire, it's a bit shame, but before I know it our hands are joined while we walk together.
The crowds which I always complain in my mind, only for today, I'm grateful to them.

Isn't this what they call a date?

The flower language was "Love which begins to sprout".、 If only he knew about it.

◇

I arrive at the square sooner than I expected.

But I don't have time to wonder.

Because, there is only a vacant lot over there...
In despair, I collapse to the ground.

On the center of the lot, an ominous black rock grown with sharp thorn stood. I hear voices from that black rock.
I drag my over abused legs as if it's screaming in protest there.

If I'm not mistaken, the demon said something about [Labyrinth].
I don't understand the connection between demon and labyrinth, but Satou-san and the others might be inside.

I was going to jump inside even by myself.
But, I was stopped at the entrance of the black rock. By the commanders who came by riding horses. They seemed to have been in the inner wall when I contacted it earlier.

I was appointed to be a temporary liaison by the commander, to help in securing the square during the construction of military post.
Since I'm near the commander, I get a hold of various informations. The open space and houses surrounding the square seems to have been sucked into the ground. Alongside with the people.

I'm sure the nimble Satou-san should be able to take refuge in a safe place somewhere. Let's believe that now.

The consul-sama who came after the military post is complete, looks unusually excited while saying something about the Labyrinth Nucleus (Dungeon Core), but I don't really understand.

◇

We got permission to rush into the labyrinth after more than a full day had passed.
Of course I applied for the first group.

I want to run into the labyrinth immediately, but Lilio does not let go of my arms. Though it doesn't mean that I will secede the vanguard position.

First, we secure the first hall that we have entered.
From here, the plan is to advance the main force whenever we finish securing a room. Although it seems too careful, it's an ironclad rule when you're marching into a labyrinth.

We're advancing slowly through the passage even while I'm feeling frustrated.
Footsteps sounds are coming from ahead.

I carefully confirm the other side of the corner using mirror.
You're lying! It's Satou-san!

Not registering this unbelievable good luck, I hesitate for a bit.

I shouldn't have been hesitating.
From the corner of the passage, I see the figure of Satou-san getting attacked by a beast monster that appears from the wall.

I shake off Lilio who was gripping my arms.

As if under the effect of magic, I jump forward like flying.

I make a landing on the wall of the passage's corner.

The beast monster bites Satou-san.

It's okay.

Satou-san avoided it.

My head becomes pure white, but it's not the time for this.

I cast Air Hammer and blast the beast monster away. It doesn't have enough power to defeat it, but let's pull it away from Satou-san first!

Satou-san got caught in the blast, but the beast monster is successfully separated from him.

Before the beast monster start its counter attack, Nebinen-sama has managed to defeat it. As expected.

I, who is relieved after seeing Satou-san's face, begin to cry and embrace him without wanting to let go.
Lilio-san makes fun of me like it's other people's problem later.

Even though he has just escaped from such dangerous place like a labyrinth, Satou-san is like the usual Satou-san.

But it may be so that I don't worry too much.
Since I will be off duty tomorrow, I should make something delicious for him tomorrow morning.

Lilio will most likely make fun of me again.

That kind of ordinary life might be good once in a while.

Death March

- Volume 4 -

4-1. Misunderstanding is a Spice for Love Comedy

Satou's here. There's this thing called the butterfly dream, and I, who think that's it's better for it to be a dream, Satou.
<TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhuangzi_%28book%29#.22The_Butterfly_Dream.22>

Could I ever go back to the nostalgic world someday?

◇

From the window, I can hear the traffic's noise outside. Did I oversleep?

I was able to obtain various knowledges yesterday, I also now understand Arisa's true color.
After the morning come, I've cooled off compared to the time when I knew that she bought herself with magic, and also, she has found out my true identity, so it would be dangerous to let her go.
I convince myself that she's a clue to go back to my original world.
Strangling the neck of a little girl just to be certain, that kind of thing is impossible for me. I'd rather run away to the end of the world.

While contemplating to lose myself to the warmth of the bed and go to sleep once again, the door opens with a bang.
There was no knock.

"Satou-san, are you awake~?　Your lover has come~"

Martha-chan sure is energetic this early. Behind her, "I, I'm not his lov...", is Zena-san who is trying to block Martha-chan's mouth while wa-wa-ing.

"Good morning."

While I might be a half-awake. I raise my upper half to greet them.
It's cold. I took off my robe after I had finished the business and went to sleep just like that, but... I see, the shirt I wore under the robe was peeled off by Arisa.

"Oh, that's quite a good body~."

Martha-chan gazes at the half-naked me interestingly. Zena-san is also looking from behind while blushing.
I thought she's accustomed with nude men as a soldier.

"I'm sorry, for making you see such unsightly figure. I'll go change my clothes immediately."

I place my hand on the bed while trying to get up. "Ahn♪"　...It's lukewarm.
When I look below, a half-naked little girl is there. My hand is attached to her naked chest... When did she crawl in?
Seeing me sleeping together with a little girl, Zena-san's face changes from red to blue.

"...Master ...If you do that much ...I'll break."

From over there, as if waiting for this timing, Lulu is sleep-talking.
Looking over there, probably because she tossed around in bed, she's sleeping sideway with her back facing here. Since her clothes is short, her cute ass is facing here... I realize that she doesn't wear an underwear.
Furthermore the sheet is stained red... Huh? I didn't attack her okay?

"Fi, fi, filthy~~~~! Satou-san is an idiot~~~~!"

Zena-san runs out of the room while crying.
Martha-chan scratches her head, "Sorry for disturbing~ Please take your time~", and she closes the door.

This is the first time I've heard filthy in real life. It feels like someone's problem.

"Master, if you have a clean cloth, could you give it to me? Lulu seems to have a period."

I take out a piece of cloth from the bag.

"Thank you. Leaving that aside, do you not chase her? If you don't go soon, you won't be able to fix the misunderstanding you know~"

It's not like she's my girlfriend, but I'd hate it if a friend keep the unpleasant misunderstanding that I'm a lolicon.

Looking at the radar, she's at the main street just outside of this inn. As expected of a soldier, she's fast. As she is, she'll pass this room after a bit.
...This skill is convenient, but it's scary if a stalker obtains it.

While thinking stupid thing, I'm wearing the shirt on the floor, since I can't afford to jump out half-naked. It goes without saying that I have had my trousers since the beginning.

Measuring the timing, I jump out from the window to the street.
I land to block Zena-san's route. I catch the surprised Zena-san, and disperse her momentum by rotating once.

"Zena-san, it's a misunderstanding."

"But, you're sleeping with such a cute girl!"
"She just got on the wrong bed when she was half-asleep."

It's safe to sleep together since she's a child right?
I have been properly wearing trousers since yesterday. I want to strongly emphasize for my innocence.

I'm not a lolicon!

"There's also another girl with black hair! E, eu..."
"Do you mean the older sister with a bad sleeping posture, it seems to be

her period."

Zena-san finally weaken.

"B, but, a man who buy slaves usually makes them attend in the night too, that is according to Lilio!"

Damn you, co-worker Lilio.

"That depend on the person. Those sisters are substitutes for maids you know? The beastkin girls are to act as guards, but they're not suitable for shopping."

"...But"

Even if she understands, her emotion still hasn't catch up huh?
If I say "If I intend to do that then I'd have bought a sexy woman." here, she'd likely be even more angry.

"Today you're wearing something different from the one piece yesterday. There are a lot of neatly arranged frills, it's gorgeous. It's drawing out Zena-san's charm."

At time like this, it's better to praise and leave her in haze.
Saying, "Such thing... It's just the clothes...", Zena-san shyly says while looking a bit happy.

"It's lovely, but aren't you cold wearing light clothes?"
"No, Since I've trained myself, it's alright."

That's not a line from a woman, Zena-san.
Here I should have take her under a man's arm and say "You'll be warm here"!

"That's right, a shop just ahead is selling beautiful stoles. Why don't we see it together?"
"Is that true? I'll go!"

Yosh, I've successfully steered the conversation off the course.

Then, after comparing several dozens of stoles and shawl, and I give her the pink stole she chooses herself as a present, her mood has completely back to normal.
Woman's shopping sure is long eh?

◇

When we got back to the inn, Arisa is calling me from somewhere slightly apart from the stable.

"Welcome back, master. I'm glad that the misunderstanding seems to have been resolved."

The main culprit is saying it like it's not her problem, gets a poke on her forehead.

"I'm home, what are you doing on a place like this?"
"We're asking Liza-san to share her breads since we were hungry."
"So you've finished eating?"
"Yup, Lulu is still eating inside. She seems to lack appetite..."

I see, for a slow person, smoked meat is probably painful. I hand Arisa several pieces of copper coins and tell her to buy some fruits.

I go back to my room for a change of clothes.
Zena-san is waiting at the inn bar in the first floor while drinking fruit juice.

Back in the room, I pour water to the copper basin on the table from the Hell Water Jug, and use it to wash my face. Since there doesn't seem to be any bed hair, I wet my hand for a bit and use it to comb my hair. Let's look for hairdresser in this world next time.

I change into a clean robe, and put on a new boots. When I'm tying my boots, I found a dried-up fruit.
Did Arisa throw this? Although, Martha-chan will clean it even if I leave it alone, I put it inside the storage since there's something that I have something in mind.

That remind me, I try to take out the 『Piping Hot Meal』 I put inside it during the first day I came here. It remains piping hot. I bite it after confirming that it's not rotten with appraisal. The taste also remain as it was.
『Piping Hot Meal』 and 『Dried-up Fruit』. Since it's interesting, let's test something out.
I allocate 1 skill point to Item Box skill and activate it. I store the remaining 『Piping Hot Meal』 inside it.
Since I likely will forget about it again, I put a note on the Notebook inside the Exchange tab.

◇

"Thank you for waiting, Zena-san."
"Don't worry, I was just having a chat with Martha-chan."

"This nuisance will disappear～.", and so Martha-chan goes back to work.

In her place, Arisa, Liza and the others are coming back, I call them.

Lulu doesn't look too well so she return to the room. I ask for a passing-by maid to bring water to the room, and give her few copper coins for tips.

I go outside with Zena-san, bringing Arisa, Liza and the others.
Putting 10 silver coins in a small bag, I give it to Arisa to buy their change of clothes and other daily necessities.
Liza and the others will act as guards and luggage carriers.

"Master, is it okay to use the extra changes money for sweets?"
"As long as it's only as far as 1 big copper coin, it's okay. Since that include for lunch, don't use it all for snacks."

"Yee～s", Arisa departs to the east street while saying so. Pochi and Tama are going along on both her sides, she looks like a children gang boss. Liza who follows from behind is looking like a parent.

"She's a very affable slave isn't she?"

"I don't know if that attitude is fit for a slave, but that girl is an easy-going person."

I don't know how a slave should appropriately act, but if she keeps being that exaggerated to her surrounding, I'm confident that she'd become a failure of a human being later.

◇

Since the weather is quite nice, we decided to take a walk together to a park nearby while chatting.

"Are you off-duty today?"
"No, I will have a duty this afternoon."
"Didn't you also have a night duty just yesterday?"
"That's right, we don't have enough personnels so a half-day holiday is all I could get."

Hmm? You came to meet me despite being that busy? I can't imagine that she has fallen that hard, does she have other business?

"No, it's nothing really important... It was the first experience of real battle for some people in the army, so to calm their heart..."

I see, come to think of it, even if it was something that wouldn't endanger my life, I was curiously calm.

Although there's some lingering memories from the battle yesterday...

No, even while fighting and after the fight with the demon, I was fine, Was it because it didn't feel real?

And even though I have slaughtered an entire community of race similar to Liza, I don't feel even the slightest guilt, why is that?

I wonder if it's an effect of an unknown Special Abilty?

Questions are whirling around in my mind...

And it's going in circle.

A fluffy fragrance tickles my nose. When I raise my eyes, there's a face of worried Zena-san.

"Are you alright? Satou-san."
"I'm sorry, my thought just wandered off for a bit. I'm alright."

Even if I think this alone, the answer won't come, guess I'll consult with Arisa tonight...

Then, I ask Zena-san to help me practice spell chanting in the park, but since I couldn't concentrate, it's not working. Even still, I continue the chanting practice as if running away from something. Zena-san patiently guides the me who was like that. It lasts until Zena-san's off-duty time is over in the afternoon...

4-2. Little Girls Shopping

"Okay~ Here we go~. Everyone, follow me~."

In accordance with Arisa's command, Pochi and Tama follow along. Arisa talks as if she's not a slave but a master. I can't possibly do it, but I'm not thinking of doing it either.
Even if master allow it, as a slave I shouldn't intervene...

"First of all, it's underwear! So what kind of underwear you girls are wearing?"

While saying so, Arisa roll up Pochi's mantle and skirt to confirm. Even if she's from different race and a girl, I think she should be more discreet, but I wonder if it's fine since she's still a kid?

"You're lying~ You're not wearing one! Don't tell me, you too Liza-san?"
"Yes, I'm not wearing an underwear."

Arisa says, "I can't believe this~", exaggeratedly with both her hands inter-lapping on her open mouth. It's some kind of expression, but since we are from different races, we don't really understand it.

"We will buy underwears for everyone~ Now, let's go!"
"Oou~."
"Oou~, nano desu~."

Seemingly forgetting something, Arisa lead Tama and Pochi by hands while walking together. Since the 3 of them are children, they could become preys for pickpocket or crime, so I follow along closely.

"Still, this country's underwear is knicker too. I guess I have to make it myself If I want cute shorts or bra~"

She seems to be dissatisfied with the selections of the shop. I don't understand the lingo, but maybe it's a type of underwear?

"It's better than having no panties I guess, Liza-san, I'm sorry for a bit."

After saying so, Arisa hugs my waist. Apparently she's measuring the size.

"Uncle, please give me 9 of this size, and 3 for this and that. How much is it?"

She confidently tries to bargain the 10 big copper coins price the shokeeper named, and she drives it down to 6 big copper coins. Furthermore she also gets 5 decoration strings as bonus. Does she have negotiation and haggling skill?
No wonder she was entrusted for shopping by master.

The 15 pieces of underwears are put into a bag. Physical labor is my role.

◇

"Kuh~ I'm losing to the sweet smells~."
"Smells good~."
"Nano desu~."

I stop the three people who are unsteadily going toward the stall with sweet smell and we go back to shopping. While she seems reliable, she is still a child after all.

"Wonder what's available for the clothings~? The materials are from linen or cotton huh~ Uwa, there are clothes from knitted grass too! Everyone, what kind of clothes do you like?"

Pochi and Tama are at loss. These girls have never choose their clothes before. I have custom ordered a clothes only once when I was still with my tribe, but beside that I normally got used clothes from other people. She probably comes from a wealthy family.

"I don't mind what kind, as long as it's wearable. Since I'm fighting with spear, a sturdy clothes would be good."

"I see, let's look for a clothes for warrior that looks cute!　I'm burning!"
"Burning~"
"Nano desu~"

I think it doesn't need to be cute, but not only Arisa, Poch and Tama look happy too. They're probably swept apart by the atmosphere.

"This, how about this one piece? The chartreuse green color is quite pretty, and this cuff's decoration is cute too~ Furthermore the back is open, so when you brush your hair up, you can seduce a man with one blow~."
"Arisa, I'm happy that you're looking clothes for me, but I'm picking this tunic and pants. It looks easy to fight with and the fabric is thick so it'll last long."

She seems to dislike my choice, Arisa scratch her head which is covered with mantle. Putting us demi-human aside, why is a human like her hide her head with mantle? It's mysterious.

In the end, besides Arisa, everyone bought two sets of tunics and trousers, and a one piece recommended by Arisa.

"Arisa, we're satisfied with just one set of clothes. I don't want to waste master's money..."
"It's not a waste! If we dress too poorly, we're disgracing master!　There's no need for flashy clothes, but we do need the the change of clothes!"

Arisa firmly declares. A girl from the same race of master insisting to this far. It surely is necessary then.

We bought from 4 stalls, and as one would expect, 15 pieces of clothes are bulky.
Since it wasn't going to fit on the bag, we bought rucksacks for each person to hold their own shares. Of course I'm carrying the shares of Lulu, who's sleeping in the inn.

We spent 4 silver coins and 2 big copper coins so far. Is it alright for slaves to spend this much money?
◇

"Next, it's shoes~."
"Shoes~?"
"We have shoes no desu."

Tama tilted her head, Pochi pointed at her own sandals-wearing feet.
It's not limited for slaves like us, even normal poor citizens don't wear shoes.

"Don't you think spare shoes is a bit too luxurious?"

We're spending large amount money like it's normal. I'm afraid that it's too extravagance. I don't mind if I'm punished, but when I think that master would be disgusted of me, my heart freezes.

"If you use your body to fight, then sandals is dangerous you know? Boots or at least shoes from thick leather is better."

"Our skins are sturdy, so it will be fine."

Arisa shocks her head.

"Biting insect, and among them some have poison, creatures like that exist.
If your soles got injured, even if you're a hero, you could still die!
Therefore, we should buy shoes."

She is push-fully going to the store, but the shopkeepers refuses.
Arisa tries to force through, but the shopkeeper doesn't seem that he's going to compromise.

"Why can't we!"
"Who want to touch demi-human foot! These guys are just right barefooted.
You're obstructing my business, go away!"

Since he's going to thrust away Arisa, I lift her from behind. The shopkeeper's fist hit my stomach, but the power is too weak, it doesn't hurt at all.

After spending time in labyrinth together with master, it seems that I've

become strong.

If allowed, I would like to fight in the labyrinth with master again. That frog's grilled meat was delicious ...No, this isn't for the sake of grilled meat at all. I was happy to be helpful in the labyrinth.

◇

"Now then~ I've pulled myself together, next is general goods!"
"Goods~."
"Goods nano desu~."

I wonder if Pochi and Tama understand what general goods are...

"Arisa, what kind of things are we buying? If it's tablewares or cookwares then we have it to some extent."
"Is that so~ then, let's omit things that I have and unlikely to be needed."

Arisa is citing the goods as if singing.

"I wonder what's available~ comb, hand-mirror, cup, flask, sewing needles, threads, cloth scissor, towel, pen and ink, and paper, I guess."

"Arisa, isn't hand mirror too expensive? Beside, what do you want the sewing kit and writing tools for?"

"Writing tools are a request from master. The sewing kit is going to be used by me. Since I was a self-sufficient cosplayer back then, even without skills, I could use sewing kit~ I could even make cute underwear and period-related clothing~."

We've finished gathering general goods from various shops, but we didn't buy hand-mirror in the end. Hand-mirror was exactly 3 silver coins. Even after Arisa tried to haggle it, it's still over our budget.

She readily gives up on buying the scissor and needle, but she only gives up on the hand mirror after terribly hesitating about it.

◇

"Alright, mission complete~ Next is the long-awaited snacks~"
"Snacks~ Meat~."
"Meat~ Nano desu~."
"Even though we've just had breakfast in the morning, we're having another meal?"

I thought meals are only for morning and evening, is it different for her?
Certainly we had many meals in the labyrinth, but that was special occasions to recover our strength that had been sapped by continuous fights.

"Sweets are needed for cultural life!"

Master has allowed it, let's not oppose it too much.
Even while we're choosing foods from the stalls, she didn't forget to pick fruits for Lulu. Since Lulu seems to be her big sister, she's a good little sister who thinks of her sibling.

"Everyone, what do you want to eat?"
"Meat~!"
"Meat!"
"Meat is nice."

Arisa becomes to look a bit disappointed.
I think there is nothing more delicious than meat, is it different for human race?

"What kind of meat?"
"The one with skewer~"
"Meat stick on bones nano desu~"
"I'd like roasted bird's leg meat."

After listening to our opinions, Arisa declares.

"Alright, since the budget is aplenty, let's go in turn~."

After that, it's the time of bliss. With moderate salt and oil, brimming with good smells, the grilled mountain mutton meats, I don't understand which kind is it, but it's meat attached to bone having chewing texture out of this world, it taste a bit like grilled chicken meat. Meat is wonderful after all.

Lastly, I tried eating the sweet paste recommended by Arisa, but it's inferior to meat. Human race sense of taste is different after all?

Even before I became a slave, I could only eat meat during a festival and it was fish meat. When I think about it, I'm lucky to be master's slave.

4-3. Miscellaneous Matters and Flags

Satou's here. Do you feel like you're dancing at someone's palm?

I feel like Son Goku from Saiyuki...

◇

"What's the matter? Master, your back is slouching you know~?"

My thought which has been going in circle stopped, Arisa is standing carrying large luggages.

"Your tummy hurt~?"
"Hurt no desu?"

I turn my line of sight to the direction where my robe is pulled, there Pochi and Tama are looking worryingly while crouching near my feet.
Liza calmly stands, but her worries are transmitted here.

"I'm okay, I was just tired after being so busy for the past two days."

I pat Pochi's and Tama's heads.
I'm really disqualified as an adult for worrying these girls. Just by thinking so, the guilt and fear that had been weighting on my mind just before disappear like fallen tides.

...I check the Log just in case any message pops up but there's none.

I really should talk with Arisa tonight. I whispered to Arisa, "Tonight, after Lulu is sleeping, spare some of your time", but, "Eh~ aren't you falling too fast?", an answers full of misunderstanding comes out. I will take that as an OK for now.

When I ask for the result of the shopping, Pochi and Tama happily begin to

take out clothes from the bag, I stop them. It has been decided to check them after we get back to the inn.
Liza apologizes for spending too much, but I tell her that it's necessary expenses, so don't think about it.

Even with current pace of spending money, counting only the Shiga Kingdom's currency I have, it'll take 2-3 years before it's dried up, so there's nothing to worry.

On the way back to the inn, I'm listening to Arisa and the girls' experience in shopping. Pochi and Tama talk about their first time shopping in glee from beginning to the end, they're telling me how fun it was.
I suggested Liza to let me carry half of the luggages and Lulu's clothes, but she gently refused.

◇

Just before the inn, I'm seeing a familiar back. She's walking a bit unsteady. Martha-chan and the helper girl from the inn are carrying a bunch of firewoods.

"Martha-chan, are you returning from errands?"
"Ah, Satou-san. Is the date over already?"
"Unfortunately, Zena-san had works in the afternoon."

While we're talking, I take some of the firewoods from Marth-chan and the girl. It may be their errands but our destination is the same. It's fine to take it by half.
Liza tries to take it, but I refuse because both her hands are occupied. Pochi and Tama are saying "Give here~" too, but there is no point taking it from little girls just to give it to another little girls, so they give up.

It's not really heavy, although it's at least 2-3 kilos. It's unreasonable for two young girls to carry two bundles of this each. They usually have it delivered but, it seems that today the amount is not enough for training so they went to purchase it.

We enter the courtyard from the back door near the stable. I put the

firewood bundles on its place.

>[Carriage Skill Acquired]

"Thank you~ Satou-san. Thanks to you, we're saved~"
"Thank you very much, guest-san."
"Don't worry about it."

Martha-chan goes to the kitchen with one bundle of firewood. The helper girl, her name is Yuni. I decided to observe Yuni who's going to take care horses of other guest.
I know that there are horses from yesterday, but I've never seen how horses are taken care, so I'm interested. This is not at all an escape.

Yuni is standing on top of a stool, and doing her best to make her small body reach the horses to brush them. I offered to help, but she said that she would get scolded by the innlady if she let a guest helps her.
After hiding their luggages on the space below the straws, Pochi and Tama come back. Pochi and Tama start helping Yuni. Liza tells me that they've helped in the night and morning too. Is it okay to get the help if it's Pochi and the girls?

Seeing the three little girls doing their best to care for the horse, I feel like a parent who came to an athletic meet to cheer for his children, I'm healed.
The little girls become 4 before I knew it, but Arisa doesn't look like she's motivated.
"Since the clothes which I've just bought will be dirty~" so she says while showing town-girl-like clothes under her mantle.

"Liza, I'm going to the temporary military post to get the spear and magic core money, do you want to come along?"
"Yes, I will accompany master."
"Me too! I'm going too!"

Pochi and Tama stop helping and run here.
"You going somewhere~?", "You go nodesu?", saying as they're coming, but since we would likely become an annoyance if we all go, I tell them to continue helping.
"Ay!","Nano desu~", and so they go back to work while carrying the horse's

fodders. I wonder why they look mysteriously happy?

◇

"How is Lulu's condition?"
"She seems to be alright. I've given her change of clothes and underwear, so if you go now you could get to see lucky lewd scenes you know~?"

I knock on Arisa's head for saying stupid things. Are you really half sister of that girl?

"Let's stop for a bit~."

I declared that and go to the Worker Guild.

"Hello Nadi-san."
"Ara, welcome Satou-san. You're together with a cute girl today."

As we entered, Nadi-san greeted courteously from the other side of the counter. There's also an old man, which seems to be the shopkeeper, but he always sleep whenever I come. Does he even work?

I talk to Nadi-san for a request to deliver mementos of the deceased. Rather than a suspicious guy like me, this town's person like Nadi-san would be better to deliver them. By the way, I tried asking the officials at the temporary military post but I was flat out rejected. Because I conveyed the deceased name and rough figures, she should be able to contact the bereaved families.

"Do you also want me to collect the remuneration on your behalf?"
"Come again? What remuneration?"

After conveying the information about the deceased to Nadi-san who willingly undertake the delivery, I hear some strange things.
It seems that she wanted to know if she's also to act as an agent for receiving the rewards for delivering mementos. I'm just being a busybody so I don't really need rewards...

"Then how about only receive the reward if the family is rich? People like those will get suspicious you're aiming for something if you deliver the mementos without asking rewards."

So it become like that. It was decided to give the worker guild the maximum limit of the fee.

"Nadi-san, I have another matter to ask..."

Since I intend to buy or rent a house, I ask for the market price. In the end, I didn't ask for the intermediation though, and it's not because I can't afford it.
Nadi-san says, "There are a lot of people who dislike living in neighborhood with demi-human, of course this applies in the inner wall, but even in the west district, I don't think anyone would sell you a house. You could find it in the east street if you look for it, but since the public order is bad, if a prosperous person like Satou-san comes to live in, then thieves would attack you on the next day without a doubt.", so I was informed.

◇

"Please sign this transaction document. The expense for appraising the spear has been deducted from the paid amount. The spear's safety has been verified so you can bring it to the town, but please take care as not to give demi-human the weapon."

I sign the document presented by the official, and receive the spear back. I wrap the spear with cloth I brought.

The price of the magic cores is 17 silver coins. The appraisal fee is 2 silver coins, I wonder if that's a proper amount? Honestly, I think you can live just being an appraiser.
Just by going to the labyrinth with 4 of us in a day, we earned 6 Arisa... Wait, that unit is funny. It wouldn't be able to afford skill holder or knowledgeable slaves but if it's for labor slaves then it's plentiful.
If I distribute it for 4 then with our current living expense, it's enough for

half a month...

"Eh~ Labyrinth is quite profitable~."
"You're risking your life though."

Arisa who was quiet inside the temporary military post began to cheerfully talk as soon as we got out. Her eyes is literally shining.

"Hey, Master, can you listen to me? Do you want to settle down in this town?"
"No, I don't have such intention."

Since we'll be obstructing people on the entrance, we're talking while continue walking.

"But, but, weren't you going to buy a house just a while ago?"
"I don't want to keep Liza and the girls stay in the barn so I was thinking of buying one but it seems to be impossible~"

Liza was going to say something but lost the moment to Arisa's vigor.

"The lover-san earlier is your local wife?"
"Don't say that unpleasant words Though I do want to get closer, she's not my lover. We've met only 3 days ago you know?"
<TLN:He's talking about local wife part>.

"Then~ I want to go to labyrinth city!"

Arisa declares while raising her hands and posturing with her entire body that it almost feel like she's letting out SFX.
Labyrinth again.

"Labyrinth city that mean there's a labyrinth there isn't it? Don't you feel repulsed to it?"
"Uuun, certainly unpleasant memories feel like they're going to resurface but more importantly! I want to raise my level!"

This isn't a game.
No, precisely because this is not a game that she'd want to level up.

"What do you want to do after you level up?"
"It's going to be demon lord season soon, so I want to level up in order to survive! While I'm at it, I want to raise magic skill that could be used to solve the Geass too."

Demon lord season, they're not cabbages and eggplants you know...
Since it was such a ridiculous phrase, I carelessly pay no attention to it.

4-4. Flea Market

Satou's here. Doing trial and error is the most fun time I ever have.
Although it's depressing when there are too many errors...

◇

"You could die before you could raise your level."
"It's alright, I have plenty of safety margins prepared."

I ignore Arisa who keeps talking in high spirit, and ask for Liza's thought.

"Liza, do you want to go to the labyrinth city too?"
"I will go to wherever master go to."
"I'm grateful for your deep loyalty, but I'd like to hear Liza's opinion. Since I will still be the one who make the final decision, please tell me your honest feeling without refraining."

Listen to subordinate's opinion and implement them as it is ⇒ If it fail, blame the subordinate, I won't be like that. I've decided not to be like that when I was in subordinate's position on my work. Don't impose absurd assignments!

"I would like to go to the labyrinth city if permitted."

"Hey~ I'm having a good speech here, listen~"
"I'll listen to you later."
"Che~, you're treating me differently than Liza-san~"

I ignore Arisa who becomes a bit sulky.
If we go to the labyrinth city, the advantages are as follow, Liza and the girls could go around freely, the discrimination would be minimized (it probably won't disappear), and Arisa and the girls could raise their levels.
The disadvantages are... None? Nono, I'll be parting with people I'm acquainted in this town, like Zena-san and Nadi-san. She worried about me

so much, while here I'm thinking such cold-hearted thing.

"Well, I have no intention of settling down in the labyrinth city, but it could be nice to go on a tour there."
"Tour... This isn't like our original world."

Isn't it fine? Different world tour.

"Rather than that, where is this labyrinth city located?"
"I don't know?"

Oy, princess.

"Wait, don't look at me with those eyes. I do know that it is on Shiga Kingdom, but I don't know the exact location."

Should I buy some simple map from the bookstore? My map only display the wilderness from back then and Seryuu city, so it's unusable for this case. I'm not entirely sure of this but it probably could display the whole area only if I've been there first.

"Master you don't have horses or a carriage right?"
"Nope."
"I wonder where they're selling it?"

Since the square near the gate has an area full of big stables, I'll ask there. Usually I would ask Nadi-san, but I've just tasked her with a request earlier, so she's probably not available now.

"Since you can afford a house then you must be able to afford horse and carriage, but for the sake better journey, let's look for hidden treasures for traveling expenses!"

Arisa points at a flea market. This girl sure has an iron heart. Even after she was thoroughly ignored, she's not discouraged.

The flea market is open on the place where the slave auction was held yesterday, on the widest square of the east district.
The slave traders' carriages and tents remain as they were, but the stalls

that were selling sake and foods in the midnight are gone, in their places, dozens of merchant open their business showing various junks lined up on a space about as small as a desk. There might be more than 100 of them.

"Master, I have a request before we charge ahead."
"I'll listen for once, what is it?"
"I want permission to use two magics. They're <<Sense Magic Wave>> and <<Sense Evil>>."

After she explained the effect of those magics, I give her permission. The former is a magic to "Somehow" able to discern magic tools and the latter is to recognize someone who is approaching with malicious intent.
Since there doesn't seem to be any particular harm, I allow her. Of course I could do it myself even if I don't let her, but I'm not the kind of a person who like to prohibit anything and everything.

"This! This is surely a find!"

The tool that Arisa proudly proclaim is a magic tool for sure, a broken one according to appraisal. The name of tool is [The Invitation of the Dream Flies in the Moonlight Night], that questionable name come up, and the appraisal result is [▲▲▲ but ●●● in order to □□ did ●▲ playing ● namagu]. As usual, description of this world's magic tools feels like harassments. The shape itself looks like a musical instrument or a music box, but the decorations are obscene so it's probably a lewd tool.

"It looks like it's broken, so no."

I go out of the stall while the shopkeeper promote the tool as a work of art, and we look around other stalls. It's fun to go around stalls in this kind of flea market.

Because I see the same short wand I bought back then for less than half the price, I bought two of them. After I bought it, I realized that it was a waste of money... but it could eventually be useful for something.

Other things are ornamental strings to tie Pochi's and Tama's short sword sheath to their belts, I also buy tassel decoration for Liza spear. Each of them only cost several copper coins.

In typical RPG, leather products are usually expensive, strangely, from what I've heard from the nii-chan shopkeeper, in this season they kill a lot of goats who don't hibernate, so they stock up a lot of leather products making it cheaper.

Because prices are considerably cheaper on flea market, it's harder to shop than on normal stalls.

I didn't forget to buy a ribbon as a souvenir for Lulu. It's a pink colored ribbon about 50cm long. The color is lighter than the stole Zena-san bought this morning. I wonder if the dye come from this neighborhood?

A lot of suspicious medicines are being displayed, but according to appraisal skill, they are just fake energy drinks with no effect. I'm interested with the energy drink part, but since the skill doesn't tell me the ingredients, I refrain.

They're also selling soap and pomade among other hair products. I'm not buying the pomade because the smell is too strong, but even though the soap is an expensive item for this market and as much as one big copper coin, I buy it without hesitation since it has nostalgic scents of milk soaps. I only want to buy one but Arisa desperately pleas, "This is good stuff!", I ended up buying all seven of the stocks.

"Master~ this! Buy this~."

The thing that Arisa offered are... glasses. Since these don't have lens, it's just a frame.

"What do you want this for? This kind of thing."
"Of course it's for master to use! There aren't enough glasses boys in this fantasy world! This is the first step to bring the fetish to this world~~~~."

I give a chop to Arisa who started to scream incomprehensible things to silent her. The shopkeeper says that it's one silver coin, but I don't buy it of course.
◇

The neighbor stall has cards-like... Isn't that Karuta. From appraisal, it's an item passed down from the ancestor of Seryuu city's earl from ancient Yamato era. It's not a magic tool but it seems to be under effect of fixture magic. The market price is 10 gold coin.

"Onii-san, you have discerning eyes~ This is a toy from the ancient empire."

Arisa interrupts, "Eh~ How do you play it?", while looking playful.

Ignoring the shopkeeper who start spouting some random things, I'm fascinated with the pile of papers in front of me. There are five 30cm thick stacks of book and papers tied with string, among them one is worth 100 gold coins. It's abnormal compared to the other bundles which are only valued for about one big copper coin each.

"How much is that toy?"
"It's 3 gold coins, but for the cute young lady here, I'll give you 7 silver coins, how about it?"

I pretend to be interested with Karuta and listen to him. Its asking price is about 1/7 of the market price. I could get some profit if I resale it, but it's bothersome to look for the customers.
Arisa loses interest after hearing the price. She seemed to have wanted it because it's nostalgic, but it seems that she didn't really want it to that much.

"It's a bit expensive. How about these bundles of papers, are they some kind of reading material?"
"They don't have any value, but since they're made of papers, burning it would be wasteful, so I'm selling them in bundles."

I casually enter into the topic with the shopkeeper.
It seems that it was disused things from when he was sorting things for a certain wealthy person. He wanted to sift through usable books to be sold later, but found out that most of them are just paper useful only for scribbling.
"How much is it? It looks like most papers are writable on both sides, so it should be able to be used for the children's writing practice."

"Right then, I'll give you one bundle for 3 copper coins. If you buy them all then I'll make it 2 big copper coins."

I decided to buy them all. I'll have the unnecessary papers for Lulu and the girls to learn letters.
I put the papers to the pouch from the bag and give it to Liza. I was going to carry half, but Liza refused.

"Customer, if you want to teach letters, how about you use this item here?"

He shows me cards with Shiga kingdom's vocabularies, while the back sides are drawn with the picture of the corresponding letters. The picture is monochrome but since the lines are highlighted, you can understand how to write it. On the [Water] card, I don't know what's drawn on it, but there are only a few like that.
1 set consist of 100 pieces. They're written with ink pen one by one. It must have been made with enormous effort, but the market price shows that it's only 1 silver coin.

"Those are some interesting cards."
"This is something that I thought myself, I was thinking of using it to teach the children in my hometown."

From what he said, it was originally made from wood wastes and ink. He thought that it would sell well so he earnestly asked a painter acquaintance to make one set, and he promoted it heavily to the chamber of commerce but the production cost and the selling price were too lop-sided. It seems that the production cost 4 silver coins while chamber only want to pay 1 silver coin for it.

"So this was all drawn one by one?"
"Yes, of course it was..."

Won't the cost become cheaper if you use printing?
Arisa stops me. She puts her forefinger on her mouth.

"What?"
"Weren't you trying to suggest printing?"
"Yeah. ...Anything wrong with it?"

"When I was in the castle, I've never seen printing. It's dangerous to carelessly introduce technology you know?"
"Even though there's casting, they don't know printing?"
"Technology seems to be something like that."

Arisa who had failed once insists, I'll stop suggesting the printing.
I apologize to the shopkeeper for having private talk during the negotiation.

"I'm sorry, it was a difficult story to tell."
"I'm sorry too, even though there are only few people who are interested with this..."
"I want to buy 1 set, how much is it?"

So the interest was low? Even though that it could be popular.
He cites 4 silver coins. That's the production cost.

"Is it fine? Then won't you not profit from this?"
"It's fine. If I can give this product to a person who understand its worth."

I'm a bit moved with his melancholy.
It's a good idea, it would be a shame if it just fade away.

"Why don't you think the way to produce them next time? Since there should be demands, you could think about the price afterward. You could look for cheap material, or a way to mass produce them cheaply, it's fun to do various trials and errors."

I thought that he would think that it's just some needless words of the customer during the payment, but maybe because he found a fellow who understand him as an inventor, his eyes start to regain its strength, after confirming that, I go toward other stalls.

4-5. Flea Market (2)

Satou's here. Man who tries to scam with get-rich-quick scheme has the same atmosphere even in different world, I wonder why?

In the first place, in this world, having scam skill is enough to get you arrested...

◇

The Radar which has only been displaying white dots until now, suddenly shows a lone red dot.
It's near.

The man pretends to stagger while plunging straight at me. His hands are holding a box wrapped in velvet cloth. A scammer, or should I say a fraudulent extortionist.

He's coming with a speed and distance that normally would be unavoidable, but I avoid it naturally.
From the surrounding's viewpoint, it probably looks like a man suddenly falls down on his own. The fact that, it is, but...

"Aaah! My heirloom's pot!"

He cried out loud, we cannot not get involved now.
After I avoided the man, I confirmed that Liza and Arisa had completely ignored the man and kept walking, properly following me. Seems that Arisa had also noticed it with her Sense Evil.

"Hey, you! Don't run away!"

The man holds the broken pot with one hand, and grabs me with the other. Matching the timing with when he grabbed me, I made him faint. The people around should see it as if he fainted because he was too exasperated.

If I only have the Fighting skill then I wouldn't have been able to do it this smoothly, thanks to Abduction skill, I did it without being noticed.

I put the fainted man to the back alley carefully. Before we leave him, I check his status because he might have friends, but he doesn't belong to any criminal guild.
He will probably loses all his belongings before he wakes up, but at least he probably won't die.

"The security here really is bad～"
"Yeah, when I first went into the east district, the content of my purse was quickly got stolen."

Come to think of it, even though this is a district with bad security problem, there sure are a lot of shops with expensive commodities. Is the crime prevention all right?
I begin to worry about other people's problems.

When I observe more carefully, there are several people with good physiques, who clearly aren't merchants, strutting along the area.
Checking on AR, they are called East District Vigilante Corp, one of the watchdog guilds. It seems that several groups are guarding the area together.

◇

Right now we are in the area of the flea market focused on pottery. I buy a bottle with lid to put medicine and ointment. The bottle is not made of glass but bisque. This is the same thing as the one from the alchemy introductory set, but won't the medicine have chemical reaction?

That remind me, I've bought an alchemy set yet I've never read the book even once.

A crowd is formed a bit in front of us.
"I wonder what～" Arisa says while briskly goes into the crowd, she comes

back after a while with a bored face.

"What was it?"
"Since they said that it's a magic tool, I expected something good... but it's just a spinning top which moves after you pour it magic power.
Furthermore it's 1 gold coin much, those people are also crowding just because they're curious."

What did you say?

"How did he pour the magic power?"
"There's a magic apparatus-like part on the disk section which he uses to directly put the magic power by hand, when he releases his hand the tool begins move. What? Are you interested with that toy?"

I leave Arisa who elatedly call me "Childish", and head toward the crowd.
When the demonstration is finished, the crowd disperses.
According to Appraisal, the thing put on the stall is called [Rolling Ring].
Since the description is like usual, I don't read it. The disk diameter is about 20cm, it's big for a spinning top. The market price is 2 gold coins.

Some children pester the shopkeeper to spin the disk again but he refused since he has no magic power left.

"Hello, if you're fine with it, I could pour the magic power for you."
"My bad nii-san. Hold the disk with both of your hands, then circulate magic power from your right hand to your left. Blue line light will lit on the disk after a bit, you can stop pouring magic power then and gently place the disk on the stand."

It's completely filled after I pour 2 MP.
Looking at Timer, I release it after I found the right time.

The AR displays the number of rotation when I stare at the disk.
It's doing 600 rotations per 10 minute. Moreover the spinning speed is constant until it run out of magic power. Depending on its torque, it could be useful for a lot of things.

Some people who are interested like Arisa earlier are coming, but soon go

away after hearing the price.

"Shopkeeper-san, I want to try something. I will buy it if it broke, so will you let me?"
"If possible, I'd like you to buy it before you break it..."

What the shopkeeper is saying is a matter of course, but maybe because couldn't sell it at all, for even the tiniest possibility of selling it, he allows me.

I ask Arisa to put her magic into the disk. It consumes 5 MP this time. Are there differences between individuals?
The rotation speed is the same as earlier. I press the spinning disk from both sides after 3 minutes has elapsed. The children are booing, but I ignore them.
The rotation is surprisingly strong. It has about the same power as a radio controlled motor.

>[Experiment Skill Acquired]
>[Verification Skill Acquired]

After I take out gold coins, the shopkeeper readily tell me the maker since he has nothing to lose. It seems that it's the work of Jahad, an old magician from the royal capital.
Seems that he's famous for creating useless magic tools.

I buy 4 for 1 gold coins. It looks useful for a lot of things.

"You, such things "Arisa You're being rude to master."

Arisa is rebuked by Liza. She was unreserved with me all this time but it seems that [You] is unacceptable.
<TLN: Okay, this might sound confusing but Arisa is using [Anta] to call Satou up there, it's informal and slightly rude version of "you" in Japanese. She actually never directly call Satou with "you" pronoun before, she alway use master when she does and not use personal pronoun at all in a lot of her dialogs with Satou but English language doesn't allow that (well, I could but it would sounds just strange with lots of passives) so I used "you" carelessly before this chapter (although it's not exactly wrong, it's not exactly right

either, so confusing)

For more information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_pronouns>
"U~ I'm sorry master."

Arisa is unusually obedient.
Because Liza's anger has force. I'm glad that she is usually mild-mannered.

"Then, what did you want to say?"
"Rather than toys, I want master to buy me magic books."
"I have books for Life magic, do you want it?"
"I'd like something more useful for battle!"

Yup, I could understand the lament of the Life magic author for a bit.
I want a recovery magic user from the present members.
I promise to bring her along when I go buy map. I think that the magic shop is still closed now, but she still insists.

◇

"Young master, could I have your time for a bit?"

I didn't think that I was the one who got called, but when I ignore the caller, he looks troubled.
He looks like a gentlemen from the outside, but his eyes are like snake.

"Can I help you with something?"
"Does young master familiar with an alchemy material called Dragon White Stone?"
"No, I'm uneducated with it."

The gentleman keeps talking with exaggerated grieving gestures.

"I think you might know this but in making antidote, one need different materials for each type of poison."
"However, this Dragon White Stone, processed with alchemy, could be used to cure all type of poison!"

"Of course, if you live normally, then you probably won't ever get poisoned."

"Yet, for Explorers who enter labyrinth, they don't know when they will encounter monster with poison so antidote is necessary."

"But, for the sake of bringing the loots back, Explorers are compelled to bring as little supply as possible."

"Therefore, antidotes made from Dragon White Stones are traded at high price in labyrinth city."

Without letting me cut into it, he had begun a solo sales talk.
I've been ignoring it, so I want him to just get to the point.

"This Dragon White Stone, especially! Especially for the young master (...), I'll give you special price for it!"

In short, you want me to buy the Dragon White Stone because it's selling well in labyrinth city, that was long just for this.

"I understand the story now, but why don't you go to the labyrinth city yourself?"
"That's what should have been but I must go to the south after this. Therefore, I will hand it over to young master who overflows with business talent."

On what basis is he saying that I'm overflowing with business talent? Beside, he should sell it to a firm rather than an individual in a place like this. Suspicious, doubtlessly.

"This is a sample, I also have the certificate."

He takes out a pebble sized item, it's a Dragon White Stone according to appraisal. I still don't know if this is really an ingredient for cure-all antidote. I want reverse look-up too.
The market price for that size is 1 copper coin.
I try to properly decline it, but the sham gentleman strongly press on it. I can't separate away easily.

In the end, we decided to go to his carriage to look at the stocks.

On top of the carriages, clusters of very small rocks wrapped in waterproof cloth are put.
The sham gentleman pulls the cloth to show off the white rocks(...) and continues the sales talk.
I see a person, who's just right for this, coming here. Let's drag him into this.

"How is it, this quality here. If you bring this to the labyrinth city then it's going to worth close to 100 gold coins. Because of the brilliance shown by young master, I will hand it over."

"Unfortunately I don't have 100 gold coins on hands. At most, I only have 20 gold coins."

The sham gentleman looks slightly bitter. But I saw the corner of his eyes moving slightly.

"This is difficult, If it's 30 gold coins then I would've yielded..."

"Is that so, too bad. Well then, let's end this talk here."

And so I pull straight away.
The sham gentleman hurriedly get back.

"No, let's count on the future of young master, I will yield for 20 gold coins this time, for investment."

Ignoring the sham gentleman, I call the gnome who's passing through on the side. It's the manager of the alchemy shop.

"Hello manager-san"
"The heck are you?"
"I'm the beginner who bought the alchemy set in your shop the other day."
"Oh yeah, how's your training?"
"Yes, It's still quite difficult."
"Well yeah, it's not something that could be done overnight."

"Right manager-san, this gentleman here is trading something called

Dragon White Stone. How about stocking some for manager-san's shop?"

Saying so, I point at the lumps of rock salt(...) on the carriage. That's right, the sham gentleman scam tactic is by first showing the real Dragon White Stone pebble to someone and then sell rock salts as the real thing.

"What are you saying, those are rock salts."
"Eeeeh~! So those are rock salts!"

I exaggeratedly act surprised and say "What is the meaning of this!", sending the fraud into panic.
If he run away, then I thought of letting him go but the manager's bodyguard with big body quickly constrict the fraud and drag him away.
You guys are too quick...

"I got dragged into a boring farce."

The manager looks truly indignant.

"Thanks for your help."
"Fuhn, you bastard must've known it from the start with appraisal. Just when I went to flea market for finding bargain on raw materials, I was made to dispose small peon instead."

To soothe him, I tell him about the thing with spinning top earlier, after hearing that he leaves me alone and quickly goes to that stall.
He probably got an idea to use it for mixing materials.

4-6. Carriage and Coachman

Satou's here. I do have a driver license but I have never actually drive for years.
As a man who lived in the center of the city, I was already satisfied with the public transport.
Although if I had my own car, it'd had been convenient in a date...

◇

"We only have horse-carriage cabs here. If you want to buy a carriage then order it on the merchant guild inside the inner wall."

I tried talking to the people on the stable areas near the gate, but they didn't sell it there. Is this like trying to buy a car in a taxi stand? I'm a bit ashamed.

"The merchant guild should have them if you're fine with used one. They were looking for buyers if I'm not mistaken."

A different coachman interrupts while we were talking.
I thank him, then I ride on his carriage cab to the merchant guild. I asked Arisa and Liza to carry the luggages back to the inn.

◇

The coachman who has escorted me to the merchant guild kindly mediates with the guild for me.

"We don't usually sell to people outside of merchant guild member, but since you're introduced by Yosagu-san, let's make an exception."

Yosagu is the coachman's name. It doesn't really matter, but the merchant

here is Sunifun-san.
He shows me two carriages. One of them is a covered wagon. The inside is about 4 tatami wide I think? The other one is a box-shaped carriage. It's about 2 meter high, and with a luggage space on the ceiling. The width inside is the same.
The covered wagon is 10 gold coins. The box-shaped carriage is 30 gold coins. The box-shaped carriage is more robust and safer, but you will need 4-6 horses to pull it. The covered wagon depends on its load, if the load is light then you only need 1-2 horses.

I wanted the safe one so I was going to buy the box-shaped carriage, but I'm told that since the center of gravity is tall, the operation of the carriage is difficult, so I stopped.
I have a car license, but driving a carriage? Since I don't have any experience on it, let's proceed carefully.

I ask to be shown the inside before buying. The inside of the covered wagon is, how do I say it, normal. Under the seat for coachman, there's a hidden space for valuables. It seems that it was remodeled by the previous owner.

"I'd like to buy this covered wagon, but could you also prepare the horses together?"

"Right, we could prepare two Gontsu horses from the guild for you. We could provide four if it's donkey, but depending on the load and the destination, they may not be suitable."

I tell him that the destination is labyrinth city and the load are 6 peoples and their necessities, he recommends the Gontsu horses for the task. If I carry heavy luggages then, even if it's slower, he says that donkeys are better.
If you want to be fast, then Shuberien horses are the ones you want but it seems that they all have been brought by the territory government.

The price for two horses and the wagon are 20 gold coins but I've managed to get it down to 18.
Sunifun-san is surprised to see me paying it fully and in cash.

Normally people will get the bill first, and pay at the later date. "I'm quite

hasty, I used to get scolded by the people on my house because of it.", I use excuse as if I'm a son of a noble who's ignorant with the world.

"Satou-sama, since 6 people are going to the labyrinth city, it would be wasteful if you only bring an empty load."

Is that so?
Certainly, half of the space would be usable. Furthermore, me and Arisa also have plenty of storage capabilities.

"Do you have any products to recommend?"

"Right then, I think that crossbow and bolt would have demands in labyrinth city. Since the crossbows from Seryuu city are made to shoot Wyvern on the sky, its specs are higher than from other region so it would sell like hot cakes. Also, since it's currently cheap to procure goat leathers and furs due to the season, I think it would be easy to profit on it."

"Excuse me, do Satou-sama has commercial right?"
"Unfortunately, I do not."

So a permit is really necessary?

"That's unfortunate, we can only issue a permit for 10 gold coins."
"That's quite expensive."

"One doesn't need permit to do the trades in small quantity inside city, but if you enter a city without one then you won't be exempt from the tariff tax so the profit will be almost nil."

I see then I should put them inside the storage to avert the tariff...
But there's no reason to earn money illegally.

"If you don't go to other city then there's an item that is exempted from tax in the labyrinth city, but since the tax for it in other cities is quite high, there's really no meaning to it."

"What kind of item is it?"

"Because there is no demand in this city, they don't have name here, but it's in constant demand in the labyrinth city. It's an alchemy material called Dragon White Stone."

I think my face shows it when I heard the name. Since Sunifun-san asks for it, I tell him about the fraud I met in the east district.

"I see, it's natural that you had such face. However, the ones here are guaranteed by the merchant association."

It seems that they sell one small barrel for 10 gold coins, the same as the market price. By the way, it seems that you could easily sell that amount for 20 gold coins in labyrinth city.
If I could sell it for twice the price then wouldn't I net quite a profit?
So I thought, but he said that because of the tariffs for the entering cities on the way and the transportation cost, the profit end up to be quite small.

"If the stones doesn't sell, then you can bring it to the merchant guild, they will buy it at the price you buy here. If you wish, we could make a letter of endorsement to guarantee the quality."

I was almost made to buy in large quantity, but I declined by saying that there won't be enough space for water and food if I bought to many.

I end up buying 6 small barrels of Dragon White Stone, 100 pieces of goat leather, 100 bundle of wool, 10 crossbows and 1000 bolts.

Because they're all 70 gold coins even after I lowered the price, I sign a temporary contract, and will pay for it tomorrow along with the products exchange.

◇

Right now, I'm riding the covered wagon outside the Seryuu city ...That said, it's not like we have departed.

After I had finished the business at the guild, outside, I asked Sunifun-san if

he could introduce me to someone who could teach me how to operate the wagon. There, Yosagu-san who were waiting for me to return said, "Then let this old bone teach you.", and that was how the flow went.

As Yosagu-san starts to teach the basic of operating a wagon.

>[Marshaling Skill Acquired]

Like always, I allocate 1 skill point to it and activate it. ...So it wasn't included in Operation skill.

It's awkward, but I can control the wagon for once. During the practice, I raise the skill level by 1, it's not as high as Yosagu-san skill level at 3, but since I could already control the wagon fine, I stop raising the level.

"Young guy do learn fast isn't it."
"Thanks to Yosagu-san good teaching."

Disregarding the cheat from skill, Yosagu-san's teaching really is good. I had failed once but he firmly taught me what to be careful with. He might be suited to be an instructor.
Particularly when I treated it like a car, forgetting that the horses are creatures, he was mad many times...

"You're good enough like this."
"Thank you very much."

"Next I will teach you how to fix and release the yoke that connects the horse to the wagon. The horse's fatigue depends on how good you are at this. If you value your horses, then don't cut corner on this."

Yosagu-san looks more serious than when he teach me to ride the wagon. He probably quite likes horses. After about 1 hour of strict training, I finally got a passing mark from Yosagu-san.

I thought that it had took a long time, but Yosagu-san said that one normally only scratch the surface in half a day, he's impressed.

Yosagu-san tells me that he was a coachman working for a caravan before

he worked as a cab coachman in Seryu city. He teaches me various things like crossbows and spears are good for defending the wagon, or that I should always resupply drinking water at cities since they're not always available at the indicated spot on the map, or that when we take a break, I should not forget to give rock salt to the horse along with water.

◇

We're going to the merchant guild with the wagon. Since Yosagu-san's carriage is left on the guild, we're going there to fetch it.
During the way there, Yosagu-san talks about the brothels in Seryuu city. It seems that he's into big breasts.
As a thanks for teaching me various things, I've decided to luxuriously treat him at the shop he recommends, tomorrow evening. Since there are a lot of loli around me recently, this will be fun.

◇

Before returning to the Monzen inn with the covered wagon, I go to receive my clothes. I come just as the delivery, so I'm able to meet the rumored tailor. I feel like I know her face, then I realized that she's the bath tub partner (lol) I met on the first day, it's embarrassing. It's surprising that she also remembers me, but there's no real development, and I thank her for the quality of her clothes as an etiquette.

◇

I ride the wagon into the courtyard of the Monzen inn. Martha-chan is just right at it, so I tell her that I've bought the wagon. Since there are rooms in the stable, seems that it's all right. However, I have to pay for the parking fee since it's a different charge from normal inn room.

"Wilcome home~?"

"Nano desu~."

When I'm talking with Martha-chan, Pochi and Tama run from the shade behind the courtyard. Tama probably wanted to say welcome. Two people also appear from the shade. The helper girl (Yuni) is also together with them. I wonder if she doesn't have prejudice against demi-human?

Arisa and the girls seems to have been playing in the shade of garden plants of the courtyard. No, that words isn't right. They're trying to learn the letters from the learning cards.

At first, it seems that Martha-chan is teaching, acting as the teacher.
But in the middle, "Let's put the card face up and read the letter, then if you can guess the content in the back right, it's yours to take.", Arisa proposed that game-like study session, but since the other members weren't familiar with the game, they became quite addicted to it.

It has already been continuing for two hours. The one who win the most is Arisa, followed by Pochi, Lulu, Yuni, Tama, and Liza in order.

I leave the horses for everyone else to take care, and bring only Arisa to the room. Lulu's expression becomes a bit cloudy, but I can just clear the misunderstanding later.

4-7. Satou's Secret

Satou's here. I have finished doing self-analysis and self-development during the days of job hunting.

I'm reluctant to look back at it.

◇

I sit on the bed while putting the bag on the side.
Arisa is taking off her mantle as soon as she enters our bedroom, and when she started to take off her clothes too, I stop her with a chop to her head.

"Ouchie~ What, didn't you lust for me?"
"Let's decide that after 10 years."
"No way~ This is a chance to violate the precious body of a boy..."

While chattering pointlessly, Arisa still proceeds to wear her clothes back and sits on the opposite bed.

"You said something about consultation at noon right? Did anything happen?"
"Wonder where should I begin..."
"Why don't you tell me all about it? They said that the king has donkey ears~."
<TLN: http://www.worldstories.org.uk/stories/story/88-the-king-with-donkey-ears>

Doesn't that story end with everything coming to light?

"Then how about removing the thing that you don't want to say? Though I couldn't tell it to anyone anyway if you order me not to~."

"That's right..."

The disposable long-range skill that I had when I first got here?　Then I change the story a little by only telling that it was used to annihilate each communities of scale tribes.
I speak in quite a firm tone, but Arisa wryly smiles for some reason.

"What's wrong, I'm not bragging you know?"
"I understand, but unique skill is our trump card, you should hide it properly."

"Sorry, I'll be careful."
"Then, what is the consultation about? Were those scale tribe communities members of Liza's race?"

Arisa listens while hugging her knee on top of the bed. Since her new skirt is long, I'm relieved that her underwear isn't visible.

Liza's tribe lived in wetlands far away from here, they were wiped out after a dispute with the weasel tribe many years ago, Liza told me the story during the frog grill party back then. It seems that she was kidnapped by the slave-hunting human when she was wandering with her family. She also said that she and her family were fearful with Dragon Valley so they didn't dare to get close to it.

"No, it's not that, it's just that even though I accidentally annihilated a whole tribe, I don't feel any guilt. I feel like the guilt was easily and completely turned off like an ON/OFF switch. As if someone is manipulating my heart..."

If I didn't almost got manipulated by Arisa, I probably wouldn't think of this either...

"They call this Paranoia in my old life! but that won't satisfy you, right"
"It's different from paranoia, it's as if the feeling of 『Guilt』 is vacuumed into closet... It's hard to explain."

"Fuh~n? Weren't you originally cold-blooded?"
"Since I was a programmer I do like to think efficiently, but I don't think I was cold-blooded. When the game I made was made fun of (on the internet), I became depressed for days."
"Hee~ So you were a game developer? What kind of game was it?"

"I'll talk about it later. Rather than that"
"Do you want to know the cause for the ON/OFF switch feeling?"

Arisa who covered my words with hers, subtly smiles mischievously.

"Perhaps your MND (mental strength) attribute is too high?"
"It's certainly high but..."

"If your VIT (Durability) is high, you become able to take many hit right? MND is the mental version of that. In the first place, you're purposely letting yourself be tormented by guilt, unless you're a masochist, it should disappear fast."

Is that so?
I thought that it was someone's doing, but it was merely a problem of my stat...

◇

"Then the next."
"Ou ke~y, come at m~e"

Arisa is playing around, but it's reassuring to have someone to confide in like this.

"Based on the logic earlier, if I have high INT (Intelligence) then I should have good memory, yet I feel like I become extremely more forgetful than before. What is the meaning of this?"

"Uwah~ eh~, you have amnesia even being this young?"

I'm about to chop her but Arisa quickly takes a guard.
Because her flustered posture looks cute, I'll let this one slide.

"I'm joking, even though comprehension and memory do go up with INT, it doesn't mean that they go up equally. If high INT means that you can't

forget then there wouldn't be any careless scholars right?"

No way...
My mentor was a professor extremely close to getting a Nobel prize. His careless episodes, like a revolving lantern, cross my mind.
<TLN: His or her, who knows? blame the kare>

"...That means, I was really just being paranoid?"

"Looks like it~."

Arisa throws herself onto the bed and laughs.

Speaking of which, I originally became paranoid because of this girl's mind magic attempt...
Even while thinking that, I'm not childish enough to utter it on my mouth.

◇

"Hey Arisa."
"What? Do you want to get sticky?"
"I'll refrain from that."

This girl really likes to utter one word too many.

"What are levels and skills in the first place?"
"Like the ones from RPG, as it is?"
"Any other meanings beside that?"
"I don't know. I didn't ask when I met god, and he didn't answer when I tried to call him after reincarnating."

"Just tell me as far as you know."
"Right then, I guess you can call skill a condensation of experience and knowledge? When you have skill, don't you feel that you 『Somehow』 know the what and how? Maybe it's close to intuition. For example, you could cook even without the skill, but if someone with high level skill cooks with the same ingredients and tools, he will make something more

delicious."

I see... However, the appraisal and market price estimation skill are quite obvious though?
Also, 'that' is different too? I confirm it with Arisa.

"How about something like the contract skill, which clearly demonstrates its effect?"
"Well, contract skill is a kind of magic skill. It has chanting and it also uses magic power for the contract. But it's still basically the same as other skill you know? Even if you don't have the skill, you could still chant and use the contract spell if you have abundant magic power. However, like other magic skills, if you don't have the contract skill, the required magic power to cast the spell will be drastically increased and the success rate will sharply drop, making it realistically impossible."

I ask about skill level too.

"Here are the standards for skill level; level 1 is Beginner, level 3 is Full-fledged, level 5 is Skilled, level 7 is Expert, and level 9 is Genius. It is said that level 10 is Godly class~ but I've never seen it~."

Is that so, I generally raised my skills to level 10... No wonder I always got the market price right, and almost always succeed in haggling.

"Don't unique skills have level?"

"Nope. This was said by the god when I reincarnated, unique skill is a fragment of god power so there is no level. Master it well, he said~"

A fragment of god power?
Certainly Meteor Shower is befitting of its name, but beside that the others are subtle.

"What?! What's with that subtle expression?"

"No well, when you said that unique skill is a fragment of god power, I thought that my unique skill sure is subtle...."

"Enough to make that subtle expression on your face?"

Although I don't have proof for this confidence, I decide to tell her about [Menu].
Despite her behavior and speech, Arisa seems reliable, she looks to be useful if I tell her.

I don't intend to tell her in detail. I'll just roughly tell her about the functions.

"I'm telling because my unique skill is Menu with the same performance as the one Arisa and the heroes have"
"Well, I will listen if you want, but it's better if you keep it a secret you know?"

Arisa advices me.

"I don't mind, however don't tell a word to anyone. This is an 『Order』."
"Okkey~ I'll bring it to my grave."

Arisa kneels on the bed, and haughtily taps her flat chest.

"My Menu has Self-Status, Status Check, Hide Skill and Inventory like Arisa's skills."
"As expected of unique skill, it's a cheat~ But Isn't it really common for a unique skill?"

"That's not all. Although I can choose to allocate point at which skill, I can't choose to do so for all skills like Arisa. It's only available for skills that I acquire by experience."
"Uwah, isn't it a degraded version of unique skill?"
"The Hide Skill from menu is superior. It can hide any skills."
"Looks like it~"

It seems that Arisa has guessed it.

"I mean, didn't you use Appraisal skill in the city? Your line of sight was unnatural, and your decision was too accurate~."

Th, this girl, is she an agent from somewhere?!

"I'm good at observing people. And you also have crisis sensing skill right? Although your movement with the accident faker was really great, it was amazing how you notice it in the first place."

"That's also part of the Menu. I can understand the position of people nearby with the radar display. There's also map display. It also has an auto-mapping function. It gradually fills in accordance to my walking range. It was a big help inside the labyrinth."

"I see, it's truly 『Menu』. Didn't you think that you were inside a game for having such unique skill without any explanation?"
"I thought that I was in a dream instead."

"Well, it's unbelievable I know~." Arisa nods understandingly.

◇

While we're at it, Arisa-sensei also teaches me about level.

"...That's why you can level up by fighting or studying, so anyway, if you actively learn new things you gain experience. When the experience reach a fixed value then your level will be raised. It seems that experience goes up faster if you fight certain monsters."

It seems that she heard about the monsters thing from the soldier and knight on her homeland.
It gave far more experiences compared to monster they normally hunted.

"Hoo?　Do you know why?"
"Not at all, I've never fought a monster."

"But" Arisa continues.

"If it's master, then you should know right? From what I've heard from Liza and the girls, they raised 10 levels in 1 day in the labyrinth. That's higher

than the result from my 7 years of desperate studies you know?"
"Certainly, it was an abnormal growth when you think about it."

"Isn't it~. That's why, in order to increase our survival chance, we should go to labyrinth city to level up~."

She said the same thing back at noon...
Come to think of it, she said another strange thing back then.

"By the way, what the heck is demon lord season?"
"I wonder if they don't call it that around here? In my country we call it for the season when the demon lord attack after about 66 years cycle."

4-8. Demon Lord Season

Satou's here. I love cherry blossom season.

The dancing falling petals, and the cheerful people welcoming new life.

I like how there are many fireworks too~

◇

"Demon lord you say, the kind that wants to rule the world?"
"Yes the one who wants to destroy the world."

"Where is it coming from?"
"I don't know, maybe hell?"

Hell huh~.

"Don't look at me with those eyes~ From what was written in the book, it's said that they're invaders from foreign world."
"Is foreign world different from another world?"
"I'm not a scholar so I don't know."

That's right huh, let's ask a scholar next time.

"Is that 66 years cycle thing true?"
"Yep, there are records where the demon lord appear a bit sooner or later, but they generally seem to appear in 66 years."
"So, it has almost been 66 years now?"
"It was 62 years ago since the last demon lord, but seems that it has been stealthily gaining power while in hiding. Since the demon lord before the last appeared 132 years ago, it wouldn't be strange if the current demon lord appears any day now."

Arisa frowns forming duck mouth. The beautiful little girl look is ruined.

"I see, any sign for its coming?"
"If the world is in crisis, the god will tell it to the oracle~."

As expected of fantasy.

"However if we wait for the oracle then there wouldn't be enough time to raise the hero, so around 3-5 years before the 66 years cycle, they summon the hero."

With that kind of period, it's no wonder that countries will have a lot of time in their hand to prepare.

"Do we know the location where the demon lord will spawn?"
"It seems that they mostly appear in labyrinths or the outskirts around it"

Labyrinth again...

"According to the book I read, it may be because it's easy for the demon lord to raise armies there since there are earth veins deep inside labyrinth."
"Couldn't it just attack head-on without raising armies?"
"Who knows? Maybe the cost to cross between worlds is great. This is based only from circumstantial evidence, but it seems that only high level demons and the demon lord are able to cross worlds."

So the weak can't cross between worlds?
Or rather, if they could appear in the vicinity of labyrinth then.

"Then, this Seryuu city is in danger too..."
"Absolutely not."

Arisa nods with serious look.

"You're very sure."
"Because, this place is close to the Dragon Valley right? If they appear in a place like this, they will be exterminated by hordes of dragons. The legend even says that there's a Dragon God there."

"Are dragons and the demon lord in bad term?"

"They're natural enemies. Normal dragons wouldn't be a match for the demon lord but if it's from sub-divine class like heavenly dragon, then the dragon is stronger for sure."

Dragons are amazing.
The threat of demon lord should be resolved if we just put one heavenly dragon near the labyrinth but...

"If the dragons are that strong then why would they even bother summoning a hero from another world?"
"That's because~ The battle between dragons(.) and the demon lord(.) is too incredible. From songs sang by minstrel about the hero from long ago, there's a story where the hero is defeated by the demon lord. After that, the demon lord destroyed several small countries and met a dragon. The demon lord was defeated in the end but the battle made two great countries sunk into sea of flames. From the rumor said by the minstrel, even the large empire that preceded Saga empire perished because it got mixed up in the fight between the dragon and the demon lord."

I see now~ It's like eliminating a robber with a ballistic missile huh.

According to Arisa, there was once a labyrinth which the dragon encamped. However, from human's viewpoint, both dragon and demon lord were threats, so they made the hero at that time to fight it. It's unknown which one won, but it's known that there are no labyrinths encamped by dragons right now.

◇

The demon which appeared in Seryuu city might have come to check on the situation of the dragon.

If the fact that the dragons are no more then this city might become the target of the demon lord.
I bring the subject to Arisa.

"Even excluding the dragon, wouldn't it be 100 years before this city

become a target?"
"Why?"
"The labyrinth is growing. It gives birth to monsters and sucks on the life of the adventurers who come seeking the magic core to grow. When the labyrinth vastly deepened, the monsters also become much stronger."
"I see... a young labyrinth isn't good enough for the demon lord."

Hmm? Wait...

"Hey, by any chance, are labyrinths tools for demon lord raid?"
"Well yes, there are some who think that."
"Then, isn't it better to destroy the labyrinth?"

If we destroy the labyrinth (Spawn Point) then the demon lord will have fewer army forces and the hero's job will get way easier isn't it?

"That may be so, but there are 6 labyrinths in this continent beside the one here. Suppose the probability of demon lord appearing in each labyrinth is equal, in 400 years, it was recognized as calamity whether or not it appeared. Furthermore, since the labyrinth produces usable materials like magic cores, people treat it as if it's a mine."

"I see, if we destroy it then people will hold grudges huh."
"Yes, Kubooku kingom was the leader of the small countries in neighborhood during the time when its labyrinth was alive, but when they destroyed the Dungeon Core, they rapidly declined."

"Could the destroyed Dungeon Core be revived?"
"Isn't that so? I wasn't around when they performed the ritual so I don't know the detail though."

So the labyrinth is appealing enough for people to even perform such an abominable ritual...
The saying that human greed knows no bounds is really true~

◇

"Still, you sure know a lot, Arisa."

"Now you're saying that after thoroughly questioning me?"

Arisa is amazed. I was sure that she would have said, "You can revere me more~", but if we have Arisa test, then she had failed.

"There were a lot of documents pertaining to the labyrinth in the storehouse of the royal family. The explanations earlier may contain deduction and hypothesis, so take heed okay?"

She's good at delivering flood of information. ...I'm nearly drowning from it though.

"I got the things about the demon lord and hero from books, documents, minstrels and storytellers' song tales. That's why the fiction and non-fiction may got mixed up. I did carefully examined it though~."

It seems that those were popular as entertainments.

"As for the details about skills and levels, they're from my own experience and the result of observation."

"Is that all you want to know?", she cutely tilts her head. Her figure is such that it would have stirred me with a craving to protect her if I didn't know her true nature.

"That's right, I forgot to ask anyone this, how many days is a year?"

According to Arisa, 1 year is 10 months, 1 month is 30 days. There is no concept of week, a month is divided by 3 part consisting of upper moon, middle moon and lower moon.

By the way I thought that my clock is off by 4 hours but now I know that one day is 28 hours here.
Compared to yearly unit, this world system is shorter for about 4%.

◇

Since there are still two hours before sunset, I ask Arisa and the girls to buy

necessities for our journey.

"Then I'm counting on you to shop for rock salt and preserved foods. Also buy two barrels for water."

"Ye～s.", "Shopping～?", "Nano desu.", I received lively replies.

"For how many days of shares should we buy?"
"Buy the shares for 10 days. Considering the season right now, normal foods should be fine for the first 3 days. The preserved foods shouldn't expire for 240 days, is it about right?　Seems that we would need quite an amount."
"I'll ask Martha-cchi if there is any wholesale shop around. And, since we probably wouldn't be able to carry it, I'll ask for delivery."
"Yeah, please do."

She's reliable at the time for shopping.

I'd be glad to accompany them, but I decide to go back to the room because there is something that I want to confirm.

◇

There's something that I didn't tell Arisa.

Dragons are natural enemies of demons.

Demons want to eliminate dragons.

Who summoned me to this world?

For what reason did I get summoned to this world?

Why do my power have discrepancies with those of the heroes?

Yes, I am,

"The one who summoned me might be the demon or the demon lord is it...."

Those words weren't questions...

4-9. Things That Could be Done Alone

Satou's here. The chemistry experiment during the days of junior school was such a fantastic time, wasn't it?

I also remember that there are differences between the thing I've learned in school and the actual practice.

◇

It's aggravating to be filled with bad imaginations with no way to prove it. Even if it's the truth, the heroes should win against the demon lord like how it usually goes. If they lose, then I'll take responsibility of defeating the demon lord in place of the dragons.

I take a deep breath several times and I'm becoming calm.
Having high MND (Mental Strength) surprisingly has its merit.

◇

I come back to my room. Returning to the main subject.
I want to do further verification and alchemy. Since the chanting practice need to be done steadily, I have no choice but to do it on the way to the labyrinth city.

First, let's verify the storage.

I take out the meal.
It's still warm.
I lightly bite it. The taste is still the same.

I put back the remaining meal to the storage.

It's a bit late, but the item name is [Seryuu Grill]. It needs a bit more ingenuity.

I add a new memo called Storage Verification. I write the date and the state on the memo.

For now, It can keep something warm, maybe it even has function to freeze state of things. I write such on the memo. I don't think that it could delay or stop time, that's way too improbable.

This time I take out the Seryuu Grill that I've put in Item Box. This one is already cold. The taste is like a cold grill. It's not rotten. Since it's only been half a day, it's natural.

Let's write that the item box doesn't retain warmth.

Next, I'm testing whether it's possible to move item between the storage and the item box.

I mark a copper coin with ink.

I try putting it inside the item box but it can't go in.
It seems that with skill level 1, it can't enter. I raise the skill level to 2 and inside it goes. I try putting various accessories, and it seems that it can only hold 4 pieces of 4 types of items. Is it the skill level squared? Let's write this on the memo.

When I open storage window in the menu, an item box tab has appeared.
I drag the item to the storage.

When I open the item box and look inside it, the transfer is successful.
I try doing the same thing in reverse, the item can be moved without problem.

Accessing the Item Box from the Storage consume no MP.

I put this information as a postscript on the storage verification memo.
Let's think how to use this next time.

Next, I'm trying if I can search the content of books inside the storage. It should be convenient to check it secretly in situation like the trouble with the dragon white stone today.
I was able to search in explanation in the game. Therefore I want to check if I could search for contents ...There were no books in the game though.

I tap the [Royal City Tour] book inside the storage and choose search on the popped-up menu.
I search for [Castle], then the explanations about castle are shown on the search hit. It seems that it can search with no problem.
The search results are displayed.
Ah, I've always wanted this function in real life~ I wouldn't have needed to scan books or OCR! Fantasy is awesome!

I suddenly come up with something and immediately try it.
If I could see the search result then couldn't I able to read the content of the book?
Since there is no browse option on the pop-up menu, I search for blank and it goes well.
I could read the entirety like it's on PC with scroll. It feels like a PDF file.
Since I could search for words with this, this is more convenient for reading books.

Next I try moving the book to the Item Box.

Unfortunately, this one can't do searching.
I wonder what's the difference?

◇

I take out the alchemy set and put it on top of the table on the corner o the room. The book remain in the storage. If it's like this, even in the dark, I could read the book like the menu.

I'm reading [Introductory to Alchemy]. It's the book that the grandfather gnome firmly told me to read first. Rather than a book, shouldn't this be called a pamphlet? It's a think book with about 20 pages.

The book starts with explanations of the tools. Moreover, it features illustrations so beginners won't get the tools wrong. It's the book that the grandfather emphasized me to read first.

First, I take out the mortar and the pestle. The mortar is not the commonly known white porcelain but something pinkish in color. According to appraisal, it's made from agate. Isn't agate a jewel?

Following the book, I grind a reagent with 1 dried medicinal plant together, and then I put the crushed medicinal plant to a small bowl filled with water with a thin metal rod.
The compounding is complete 5 minutes from the start. Since it's the first thing to do for beginners, it's very easy.

>[Compounding Skill Acquired]

I immediately allocate skill point to the maximum and activate it.
The finished aqueous solution is [Antipyretic Medicine]. Judging from Appraisal, [Antipyretic Medicine -3] is under the name, while the detail says [Liquid medicine for lowering fever. The effect is extremely low, it's just a mere consolation]. This is my first time doing compounding, it can't be helped that it's low quality.

◇

"Those who have magic power go to chapter 2, those who don't go to chapter 4" is written in the next page of the introductory book.
It feels like a manual for business software, or rather, a game book from years ago.

Chapter 2 is about basic refining. Seems that I have to make actual potions. According to the book, drugs made by compounding and potions made by refining have different effects even though they're similar. Production of potions need magic catalyst and MP, in exchange the effect will be displayed in real time.

I continue to practice the refining according to the book. I put the potion I made earlier inside a metal beaker. Then I mix it with two reagents there. Seems that I have to pour magic power before the reagents are dissolved. I tuck the beaker between my hands and imagine magic flowing from my right hand to the left.
It was like this with the spinning top, you pour magic by circulating from your right hand to left, I wonder if this is some kind of rule? Or is it just a simple custom?

The two reagents begin to shine faintly when I pour magic power. Since the room is dim, it glitters nicely. Seems that it's complete after it stops glittering.

>[Refining Skill Acquired]

It's not an alchemy skill huh. I also get refining skill to the max.
The completed Potion is an Antipyretic Potion -4. Since it's wasteful to discard it, I put it inside the bisque pot and put it inside the Storage.

◇

I open the menu to save the compounding recipes in the memo. The menu has a new tab, Production. I open the tab, and [Compound: Antipyretic Medicine], and [Refine: Antipyretic Potion] from the earlier are there. Not just them, there are also [Woodcraft: Club (Improvised)], [Composite: Insect Leg Spear (Improvised)], and [Composite: Insect Leg Spear (Improved)].

I'm sure that it wasn't there before, I wonder if I need to know 5 recipes as the prerequisite? Or maybe it need recipe beside improvised one. But since it's a unique skill, it's useless to try to verify it, so I stop.

I try tapping on the [Compound: Antipyretic Medicine]. There are 4 sub-menus, they're Compound, Inspect Recipe, Delete Recipe, and Detail. Compound seems to be disabled, it's grayed out. I though that maybe I could do compounding inside the Storage, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to be so. Even after I store the tools and reagents into the Storage, it's still

disabled. There might be some conditions.

Then I continue the training to the end of the 6 chapters in the introductory book. Because there is one recipe in each chapter, I got to remember, [Compound: Painkiller], [Compound: Ointment], [Refine: Lower Recovery Medicine], and [Refine: Painkilling Magic Medicine (Potion)], those four.

Probably because I've maxed out the skills to maximum, all the medicines after chapter 3 are attached with [+5]. [The effect is extremely high, it's the highest quality] is written. I'm thinking of verifying the difference in effect next time.

◇

I'm about to start practicing the fifth chapter of the introductory book but...
<TLN: Yes, apparently this is happening before the last two paragraphs before the last ◇>

There are signs of someones' holding their breath on the other side of the door. The two luminous point shown on the radar haven't moved from awhile ago.
I stealthily approach the door, and open it at once.

Arisa and Martha-chan come rolling in as if being pulled by the door.

"What are you girls doing?"

I listen to the two while looking from above. My voice has become a bit flat.

"Na, nay.", Arisa is speaking in Kansai dialogue for some reason.
<TLN: Imagine "Ch, Chau nen." in Kana Ueda's (Rin Tohsaka) voice>
"I, I was just curious since I saw Arisa clinging to the door.", Martha-chan.
Yet you've also been clinging for more than 5 minutes, aren't you?

The two shaking girls are about to step away. They suddenly turn around and about to dash away to the corridor.
I quickly grab the nape of the two and restrict them.

"Wonder what were you really doing?", I cross-examine again.

"I'm sorry, I was tempted to see Satou-san embarrassing moment so I peeked."

Martha-chan gallantly apologizes.

"Uu~ because. A boy who's living together with girls! Went back to his room alone?! Don't you think that it's the job of the guardian to see what kind of foolery would unfold?"

Who's the guardian.
Furthermore, foolery... I don't have the mindset of a middle-schooler.

I release the gallant Martha-chan. Arisa isn't properly reflecting, or rather, her lust can plainly be seen so I punish her by poking her forhead 3 times in a row.
Seems that it still hurts even though I held back, she's holding on her forehead while rolling around on the floor. This might be a good medicine once in a while.

4-10. The Night Before Departure

Satou's here. I like both lawful shops and shops in gray-zone.
But I'll pass on compensated dating, Satou's.

◇

I take Arisa to the wagon. On the way there, I meet Martha-chan in the tavern, but she doesn't look particularly shy and offers me a meal.
Since I intend to eat outside with Liza and the girls, I decline.

When we got to courtyard where the wagon is, the 4 girls are waiting while looking bored.
When Liza notices me coming, she comes as the representative.

"Master, is it fine to put the luggage on board?"
"Let's see... Tomorrow, since we'll be picking more luggage from the merchant guild, let's do that tomorrow, but if we leave them here we'll be troubling the landlady huh."

Arisa whispers to me when I'm still thinking about it.

"Let's keep them in my Item Box? Don't you think that it's safer there?"
"There are only people we know now, so it's fine I guess."

I instruct the girls to pile the luggage inside the wagon for now.
The three small girls get up to the wagon to receive the luggage. Since Pochi and Tama have strength stat on par with two large adults, they handle the heavy preserved foods lightly. It looks as if this is some kind of magic show.

Arisa and Lulu are sorting the goods inside.
Needless to say, I and Liza are in charge of uploading the luggage. Since it's wasteful to wear expensive clothes for heavy duty job, I change into ordinary clothes. It's a simple linen tunic.

When we've finished loading the luggage, I made the girls beside Arisa to fetch water for 3 small barrels. One small barrel can hold 6 liter of water.

"You don't really need to exclude Lulu. I've talked about my Item Box with Lulu, you know?"

I'm afraid that someone would pick a fight with the beastkin girls if it's just them, so I ask Lulu to go with them.

"For now, let's split the preserved foods in half for each to keep, I'll carry the magic tools. Probably no one would steal the learning cards so put it on the wagon, and let's leave the foods that were entrusted to Liza and the girls alone."

"Kaay~", Arisa lightly said while storing the preserved foods into her Item Box. I also store the same amount.

The preserved foods are jerkies, baked black breads, fried beans and dried sweet potatoes.
Others that are in the bag are wheat flours, root crops, rock salts, and various other groceries. Since leaves vegetables are likely to give stomachache, it seems that they didn't buy it.

I've only noticed after doing this but...

"I'd love baskets or boxes to sort things out."
"Yeah true, I also want some cushioning materials. If we leave this alone, the cookwares will be noisy when the wagon shakes."
"I want thin ropes too."
"Ropes? Ah, for airing clothes huh."

"I think that having sturdy ropes is good."

Liza who just came back from getting water suggested.
I can't imagine what it would be used for.

"It's for draining blood from preys during the journey."

Right, we need ropes to tie thieves who may appear.

"You're such a philanthropist~ Thieves are thoroughly good-for-nothings and only bring harms, it's better to snatch away treasures from their hideout and annihilate them afterward. Even that famous thief-hunter girl said so you know~?"

What kind of acquaintance is she?
So there's a person who's famous for that, what a dangerous world.

"Are we not short on anything else?"

Pochi raises her hand while standing on her tiptoes. Did Arisa taught her that?

"Yes, Pochi-kun. Say it."
"A stool! I want one no desu~"

When I ask in detail, she seems to have used a stool when she helped taking care of the horse. She's brimming with enthusiasm to take care of the horses during the journey too. She's really reliable.

Tama also raises her hand in the same manner and says, "Brush~?". She tilts her body in troubling manner while raising her hand, cute. It seems that she wants a tool to brush the horse and clean their hoofs.
Tools for taking care of the horses, I completely forget about them.

Lulu also timidly raises her hand.

"....U, umm.", Her face turn bright red just by saying that.
I wonder if it's something that embarrassing? I glance at Arisa... She winks back. Are you from Showa era!

"I, I want a washboard and a bucket."

Is that really embarrassing? I have them in the storage so I've forgotten about it, but it's certainly necessary.

"If it's really possible, I want a mirror! I'm fine with hand-mirror size."
"Arisa, you're too extravagant."

Liza firmly gives a warning to Arisa. It's unusual for Liza to give an opinion before I decide.
I wonder if it's expensive in this world? That reminds me, I don't think I've seen any glassware. But, I'm sure there were mirrors from polished metals.

"I'd like to use one too, let's buy it if it's not too expensive."
"Yay."

Arisa looks unusually happy without acting. Lulu is also smiling. Liza doesn't have any objection since it's my decision. Pochi and Tama... don't seem like they understand.

It's decided that, tomorrow when I'm going to take the commodities from the guild, the five will buy the things we've just discussed.

After changing clothes, we go out to eat together.
That day, we eat dinner at stalls not far away from the gate inn. Since we've been eating meats everyday, I order light soups, and soy bean breads.
Since Pochi and Tama look so sad while we're eating, I order meat skewers for four portions. It's Liza who looks the happiest somehow... but it's okay as long as they're happy.

◇

Since I meet Yosagu-san who just come back from work on the way to the inn, we decide to advance the plan to go out during the night a day forward.
Arisa is saying, "Even though you have me, you adulterer~", but I make Liza to carry her like a luggage back to the inn.

"Is that okay?"
"It's fine, she's just something like a little sister. The person herself thinks that she's a guardian though."

The east district is crowded just like yesterday.
Yosagu-san, who's chewing a bought skewer from stalls, is greeting girls who are gathering under the outside light, while we press forward to the

crowds.

When I ask if they're his acquaintances, he says, "They're courtesans." They usually work as waitress and courtesan in the inn at the same time, but during the slave auction they seem to look for customers outside.

Confirming from AR, a lot of them have [Sex Technique] skills. ...However, I'm anxious to see that a lot of them have various venereal diseases on the abnormal condition tab. Mostly are in [Incubation], but nearly 60% of them are suffering from it.
I wonder if it can't be healed with magic?

We enter red light district and walk for a while. Metal plates of magical light are hung on the shops, illuminating them with cheap-looking light.
Most brothels are two story buildings with verandas on the second floor. Courtesans who wear expensive clothes with high exposures are lining up on the verandas trying to lure guests.

When I look, they raise their skirts and show their bare legs then throw kisses. It's a feature every shop has, interesting.
The people who have [Sex Technique] increase, and proportionally the people who have Venereal Disease[Incubation] decrease for about 30%. As expected there is no one who has Venereal Disease [Diseased].

"Young master, here's the shop. Let's enter quickly."

Yosagu-san pulls me to the shop. This shop seems to be refined, there is no girls attracting guests on the veranda.

When I enter, verandas are installed on the second floor high along the corridor. I lightly wave at the girl who I saw from outside there.

The floor is made from bare wood, but it's well polished. Is it about 30 tatami wide? There are a stove, doors and a stair to the second floor inside. There are 4 rooms shielded with cloths on the left and right.

"Welcome to the Seryuu Branch of Captivating Mansion."
A woman in later half of her 40 come out from the back door while greeting us with penetrating voice. The woman is wearing a pink dress with

excessive frills, but her fat is too self-asserting, her clothes looks like it'll burst apart at the seams.

Guided by the woman, we go to one of the partitioned room.
It seems that this is a room for guests to wait for the girls, since it'd be awkward to meet acquaintances in a brothel. The obese shopkeeper sure knows her stuff.

There are a sofa and three low quality marble tables inside the room. A girl of around 10 years old is standing by as a parlor maid.

"Excuse me.", the girl puts small green sake cup in front of me and Yosagu-san. Transparent liquids are inside of them. It's a distilled liquor from the smell.

According to the AR, the cups are made from jade. The liquor inside the cup is Shiga sake. It's a strong liquor with 50% alcohol content made from wheat.

"Ku~ delicious!", Yosagu-san gulp the liquor in high spirit.
It seems that he forgot to drink this sake when he went to this shop before.

The girl, is pouring the sake huh?
I sip it once as a social act. It certainly tastes good. It's like whiskey but transparent instead of amber-colored, I wonder if the processing is different?

Before Yosagu-san had his third cup, the shopkeeper comes back with 5 girls.

The first is the most beautiful girl with blond hair and blue eyes. With a small face, thin eyebrows, and strong-willed looking big pupils. Sticky-looking lips. Two large breasts that look like they would spill from the open chest clothes. Most likely, she's the most popular girl in this shop. She's 18 years old.

The second and the third are twins. They're beautiful girls with black hairs and black eyes. Their most notable looks are their western, or rather, French style. One of them has smaller breast than the other, but it's still

around C cup. It seems that there a lot of people who spend the night with the two of them together. Of course, the fee will be for two people. They're 16 years old.

The fourth is a woman with droopy eyes. With dull blond hair and reddish brown pupils. Her eyebrows are thick, she's a gentle healing woman. Her breast is the biggest. It seems that there are a lot of repeaters for her. Her voice sounds mellow, it's comforting to hear. She's 21 years old, the oldest in this shop.

The fifth is a girl with red hair and reddish brown pupils. She's pales in comparison with the other girls but she has the nicest expression. She feels lively or rather, fascinatingly wholesomely erotic. Her breast size is average, but still around D cup. For me it's quite enough to be categorized as big breasts. 20 years old. She's the only person in this shop who doesn't has sex techniqu skill.

Every girls are wearing thin one-piece sticking to their skins looking erotic. The chest and abdomen area are transparent, I cannot help but utter GJ.

"Which girl will you choose?", the shopkeeper asked. Yosagu-san asked with his eyes, "Please don't hesitate to choose your favorite girl.", I said and he really did choose the most beautiful girl without hesitation.
I also aim her, but I'll yield here.
Yosagu-san drinks down the liquor left in the cup in one gulp, and leave the room with that girl. It seems that the second floor is for the guests to enjoy themselves.

I was at loss for a bit, but I chose the fifth girl in the end.
The guest room only has a simple bed, but it's clean and smells good so I have no complaint.

When we entered the room, the girl hurriedly took off her clothes and flaunted her body. I enjoy the feel of OPPAI liberated from the clothes, enjoying scooping them with my hands.
It's exactly the festival of OPPAI. Who was it who says that OPPAI contains man's dream?

I hug her waist and we fall down to the bed. It's a mature woman's body

after a long time, so I'm taking my time to carefully enjoy it ...in various ways.

Though since the girl's reaction was good, I unintentionally gave too much service. Like this, I'm not sure who desire whom.
We enjoy ourselves until midnight. She faints from too much pleasure in the middle, so I stop.

>[Sex Technique Skill Acquired]
>[Lover's Talk Skill Acquired]
>[Seduction Skill Acquired]

Apparently this body has too much stamina, the partner couldn't catch up. I use her breasts that I've enjoyed plentifully as pillows and depart to the world of dream.

4-11. Departure (1)

Satou's here. I love to make programs without being limited. The last time I did that was when I made a legged robot for my graduate research during college. When I became a working adult, I haven't done it.
This time, it seems that I'll make magic tools.

◇

Yep, it's a good morning.
I walk the town while enjoying the morning sunlight, feeling refreshed.

Yosagu-san was unlike me, yawned constantly looking sleepy. I invited him for breakfast but since he didn't come home his family was probably mad so we decided to part ways outside the shop.
"If I made it big in the labyrinth city, let's come again.", I shouted him that.

Even though it's early in the morning, the people who are having meals on the stalls, and the people who are selling fresh groceries are lively.
The vulgar atmosphere that usually permeates in the east district was probably the fault of the visitors.

I'm smelling something good from the stalls.
Although I'm not particularly hungry, let's buy some souvenirs for the girls.
Though I can't buy sushi in wooden box pack like those fathers from Showa era.

I buy a big handbasket made from thin wood from a street stall. It's about as big as two rice bowl. I also bought two lidded containers for soup and put it inside the basket.

I buy warm meals and put it into the Storage through the basket. I keep

buying various things to the extent that it doesn't look unnatural.
Soup made from meatless animal bone and vegetables. Thick stew with vegetables and dried meat. Various grilled meats starting from grilled goat meats. Seryu grills. Freshly baked flat breads. Steamed potatoes. There are some scratched fruits from many fruits I've bought.

I've bought for about 30 servings. It's too much for souvenirs but I'll keep some for emergency. With these much, even if we are in an environment impossible to light fire, I could still provide warm meals. In the first place, I plan to use the Storage so that we don't end up in desperate situation.

I wanted to buy alchemy materials, but it was closed at the time.

◇

When I get back to the gate inn, Arisa who saw me from the window comes running down.
After she looked at my face, she begins to stomp the ground with her foot.

"Uuu~~~~. Mou! That glossy face~~."

She bites the edge of a handkerchief, taking a pose. Every single one of her gestures are old... let's not ask her age before she was reincarnated.

"I was the one who was supposed to take your first time~~"

I don't remember making such promise.
I keep silent about it since it'd be bad if I don't.

"You're fussy, and this isn't my first time anyway."
"Nooo, even though it was one in a millennium chance to snatch away the DT of a boy...."
<TLNote: DT, Doutei, Virgin. :p >

My condolences.
I call for Lulu, and we gather in front of the wagon. The breakfast are potatoes and meat skewers that I've just bought.

I talk to Arisa in whisper to check on Lulu's condition. If she still hasn't recovered, I'll postpone our departure for two days.
According to Arisa, it was only serious in the first day, it's fine now.
Since it looks painful, let's give her the painkiller I made from practices.
There are five of it, those should be enough.

After we finished our simple meal, I advance as planned yesterday.

◇

I ride the wagon until the parking space of the Commercial Guild. Horses were easier to fine-drive unlike cars so it was easy.
It's lively here too in the morning. Every carriages which occupy half of the parking lot are unloading their cargo. Every carriages look well seasoned. The ratio for luggage carriages and covered wagon is fifty-fifty. The carts are loaded with a lot of 10 kilogram bags. The people who are moving the bags look like ruffians who wear villager-like simple long-sleeved shirt and trousers. I can see patchworks on its knee and elbow.
While I look at other carriages out of curiosity, Sunifun-san who has finished confirming the load and assessing the prices comes here.

"Good morning, Satou-sama. You came really early."
"I'm sorry. Am I troubling you by coming too early?"

I don't think that what I'm doing is that bad, but let's apologize for now.

"Not at all. The god of business surely like people who are quick."

Even though Sunifun-san said that, if I look at the surrounding, it's probably customary to bring in the goods in the morning and bring it out in the afternoon.

I am guided to the warehouse. The goods that I've ordered yesterday are put on one of the section. I confirm the products and their number with the help of an employee. I check the contents of every barrel of the Dragon White Stone and close the lid.

Sunifun-san watches over me doing that like a grandfather watching over his grandson. Hey, you're not that old right.
I ask the employee to carry the goods to my wagon, while I complete the payment for the transaction at the office.

When I get back to the wagon, the loading is complete so I visually check on the goods. Since I've put tags on the Dragon White Stones, it doesn't seem like it has been swapped. It can't see through if the inside of the barrels are swapped, but they probably wouldn't have enough time to go that far.
I thank the employee and give him one big copper coin.

"May you have good businesses!", Sunifun-san left the words as farewell as I left the guild.

◇

"Welcome nano desu~."

I'm greeted by Pochi when I return to the gate inn. She hugs me as I go down the coach seat, so I rub her head. I separate from her as I pat her head, and I work to unfasten the horses from the wagon.

"I'll help no desu.", she immediately stands on the stoll that we've just bought and begins to help. Might as well teach her the way to unfasten the belt, manage the yoke, etc. It's also good to review myself as I teach others.

"What's everyone else are doing?"
"Lulu is washing over there. Others are shopping no desu~."
"So Pochi and Lulu are house sitting huh?"
"I'm watching the luggages no desu~"

Pochi said it pridefully. She's certainly qualified for it. I can somehow imagine Tama sleeping on top of the luggages.

I ask Pochi to take care of the horses in the stables. Meanwhile, I put the goods I brought from the commercial guild into the Storage.
I thought of leaving the goat leathers and wools outside, but the smell was

severe so I stow it away. Let's practice to make deodorant next time.

Pochi carried the luggage until it loaded. Pochi says, "Watching the luggage no desu." from the wagon. Since she's doing her best, I'll go to see Lulu's condition. Since the laundries that Lulu is doing are underwear, I go back without calling her.

◇

After that, I ask Pochi for house sitting, and take a cab to the plaza before the castle. The flower bed on the center are still being worked on but the pavements are already beautifully set with the paving stones. They sure work fast. They might have used magic since this is fantasy.

The wall on the magic shop are still being repaired, but it seems that it's open for business for once.

"...then... catalyst... scales. If you get your hand on these, I'd like you to deliver it to the magic corps station."
"I'll see to ask my magicians and alchemist friends. At most, I could get my hands on 1-2 pieces of scales."

As I enter the store, a magician-looking old woman and old man come out while having those conversations.
The old man take a glance at me but leave without saying anything.

"Oh, a visitor eh? I'm sorry but I don't deal on love potion or energy drink. Go to the alchemy store in the east district."

It's a thin and dried up old woman. Wearing clothes appropriate for a magician. Deep blue robes with long sleeves, wide-opening tall hat unwieldy for indoor, wearing numerous ring with suspicious design on her fingers, and with about a 5 cm big emerald pendant designed after skull on her neck.

"No, I want to buy magic books."

She raised just an eyebrow in surprise after hearing my words. She put lean the cane which was on her hand to the wall and take out a litograph from under the counter.
Yamato stone again?

"We don't sell magic books to a man without talent okay? Recently there are a lot of scoundrels of nobles who buy magic books just for prestiges, soiling them. I'll sell the books only to people having certain amount of magic measured from this instrument."

...Dang, I should've brought Arisa along.
I don't know how far this stone can measures, but it'd be bad if my enormous magic power is known.

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid that it'll break if I carelessly touch it."
"Fuhn, excuse huh? If you put magic power on this, it will emit blue light. It's cheap compared to the instrument in royal capital, but that's exactly why it's robust. So that it won't break if a veteran do his best, magic power stops flowing after it feed on the required amount. If one has a capability of a full-fledged magician then it will shine blue. Other than that it'll stay red as it is."

Is it safe? If it's as the old woman said that there's no problem but if the punchline is, "Actually it can read the exact value.", that's scary.

"If you don't want to try then go home. I have a business to get Dragon Powder from my alchemist friend after this."

The powder that the old man mentioned earlier is Dragon Powder huh.
When I thought that it's a familiar name, I remember that I obtained some in the labyrinth.
Would she be willing to trade magic books for this?

"Shopkeeper-san, If it's dragon powder then I have it, if you're fine with I can give it to you?"

I take out 5 vial of Dragon Powder from the bag. I got 6 from the labyrinth, but I decide to keep one in hand.
When I take it out I estimate the market price... 20 gold coins huh?

"Are those real?"

The old woman picks one vial and takes out one earpick worth of powder, then she tests it with some reagents and apparatuses.

"I'll buy it for 10 gold coins a vial."

What a greedy old woman.
When I say that the market price is 20 gold coins, she says, "That's the price on a shop", rejecting it.
Since I don't intend to force the sales and the aggrement doesn't seem to be achievable, I'm about to leave the shop, but her hands hold out at the speed that doesn't match her age. Her eyes are fiery and glittering, she's a bit scary.

"W, wait! That thunder old man is probably going to buy them at that price, I'll buy it at 20 gold coins a piece. But I'll pay at the end of the month as the condition. Since the payment from officials is slow."
"I'm sorry but I intend to leave the city tomorrow, so I can't accept that condition."

The negotiation continue until lunch time, and in the end, it's decided that the payment is in the form of magic books. Because magic books higher than intermediate level aren't allowed to be sold to people who aren't a citizens of Seryuu city, I'm having a hard time choosing books that worth 100 gold coins.

First, I'll collect lower-class magic books from every elements. Still it's only 40 gold coins, so I buy thesis and investigation, and various miscellaneous notes for reading materials. It's 60 gold coins up to this.
Then I buy canes and amulets. It seems that only those who have permit from the city are allowed to sell magic scroll, so I can't buy it here.

Furthermore, I buy cheap catalysts for making potion. It seems that they're made from magic cores from lower class monsters.

"Oh, your main job is an alchemist eh. Then, how about these books?"

The old woman takes out two magic books from the back of the store

written with, "Magic Catalyst and the Material", "Seeds and Catalysts". I'm a bit worried with those titles, but since the author is named Jahad, I buy it. It's the maker of the spinning disk magic tool if I'm not mistaken.
I buy 5 other books written by this guy.

"15 gold coins remaining is it. What else do you wish? I don't have good magic tools left. At best, I have a tool that emit light, or a tool that heat up if you put it above."

Oioi, you're putting out good things in the end.
When I receive them, the first is a crystal ball about as big as a candy ball and the other is something black that looks like a pot stand with 20cm diameter. It's about 3 cm thick and feel like it's made from porcelain. On one side, a copper line is drawn on top of a concentric circle.s

The crystal ball-- Light Drop begin emitting light after I pour it magic power. Seems that it shines for 30 minutes every time it's poured with magic power. The pot stand-- Light Hot Plate is also the same, by putting magic power on the copper line, it gives warmth for 10 minutes. However, since it only emit heat enough to scald a person yet not enough to boil water, it's not suitable for cooking. That should be usable to warm tea or stew though.

The Light Drop is one gold coin each, while the Light Hot Plate is 3 gold coin. Since the Light Drop is in stock of two, I buy both.

In the end, since I couldn't find good stuffs for the remaining 10 gold coins, it's exchanged in cash. I thought that I have to use it all up but that's not good. Dangerous, dangerous.

"Fuhn, putting money aside, it's been a long time since someone bought this much."
"Thank you very much, I was able to buy many nice things."

Thanking the old woman, I ask to deposit the stuffs I've bought in the store for a while. After this, I've completely forgotten to buy map from the bookstore next door.
The old woman kindly agree to keep the stuffs, then I go toward the bookstore.

4-12. Departure (2)

Satou's here. I'm not a person who often take trips, but I've strangely grown attached to a city I've only been to for a few days.
I'm want to come again for notable tourist attractions.

◇

The bookstore is kept by the already recovered gray haired old man, Semone-san isn't in the shop. I'm not able to worship that glorious proportion... regrettable.

The shopkeeper give me the map to labyrinth city.
How do I say this, it's a map that screams, "Measurement? What's that is it tasty?". Although I didn't expect it to have map symbols or contours, but it's questionable if this thing has concept of cardinal directions.
Probably it's shown on my face, the old man explains. Accurate maps are classified informations so only people from the kingdom's side could get a hold on it. I miss Google Map.

Since it's better than nothing, I buy 5 maps until it reach the Labyrinth city. Later on, I learn that merchant guild sells better maps.

My business is over with this, but the shopkeeper, demonstrating his commercial spirit and kindness, recommends me various books.
Books that looks like it'll be useful for journeys like, "Journey to Royal Capital", "Dictionary of Herbs", "Carriage Repair Reverse Dictionary", etc, I'm charmed by their titles so I buy all the recommended ones.

There are introductory books for woodworking, smithing, engraving and various manufacture-related books, but since there's no demand and coupled that they're old books, they don't sell well at all.
When I show an interest to it, the shopkeeper begin to pile one book after another. Since they could be bought for 2 gold coins for everything, I decide to buy them all.

Furthermore, he also recommends good reading books for breaks during a journey. Although most of them are about love or heroes, but I find exceptions like, "Ancient Battlefield and Withered Labyrinth", "Mad Magician and Death Army", "Man who Created Labyrinths". I buy the three of them and 5 popular picture books.
Picture books are good for learning letters.

It was a bit over the budget, so I drive it down to 10 gold coins.

◇

I bought too much indeed. The bag with almost 30 books inside is quite heavy. If I didn't have the status compensation, my waist would have gone bad.
It becomes quite the amount after I receive the stuffs I've bought from the magic shop. Though it's not like I could not walk back carrying them, I'll look way to conspicious so I wait for a cab carriage.

"Hello, nimble Onii-san."

I turn toward the voice behind.
With a face as if saying that the prank is successful, it's Zena-san's coworker girl friend (Lilio).

"Hello, Lilio-san. Did you imitate Zena-san?"
"Ehehe~ Did I pass? Hey hey, did you skip a beat?"

I somehow understand that I mustn't let Lilio meet Arisa.

"I noticed immediately because your voice is different."
"Eh~ Too bad~ but, but, isn't that love? The power of love?"

Girls really do like love talks huh.
Lilio is coming closer to impose her small body. I have enough loli girls, so push her shoulder back so our body doesn't stick together.

"Are you alone today?"
"Yep, the other soldiers are sleeping~ But Zena, from yesterday noon until midnight today, is keeping on guard the who~le time. Magic troops are lacking in number isn't it."

I wanted to say some parting words to Zena-san before I leave for the journey but...

Alright, let's change the departure to tomorrow morning.

"Lilio-san, could you deliver a message for Zena-san?"
"Okay~ But no passionate lines that would make chest hot okay? If it's too intense, it might be interpreted wrong you know~."

While crossing her arms, Lilio talks with a bad face.
I ask her to tell Zena that I'll be leaving early tomorrow morning. Lilio willingly agree to deliver the message.

"Acha~ Zena's first love end up unrequited huh~." , It seems that she intended it to be a monologues, but I heard it loud and clear.

I don't reply to that and go back to the gate inn wth a cab carriage.

◇

On the carriage, I store the books inside the Item Box. When Arisa knew about me going to the bookstore, "Didn't I say to take me along~", she's angry, but after I tell her that I bought every elemental beginner magic books, her smile returns.
Besides, you probably haven't learned how to learn Shiga kingdom letters right?

"Then, are we going to depart?"

Since Arisa asked, I tell everyone that we'll depart tomorrow morning.

"I'm going to the alchemist shop on the east district and the general guild to

finish some business, so check if there's anything that we forgot to buy. It's fine to play learning card when it's over."

"Card!", "Nano desu!", Pochi, Tama and Lulu rejoice. It's rare to see the figure of Lulu who looks happy like a normal girl, I click on REC button in my heart.

"Empty dummy barrels are too light it'll seem unnatural, so I think it's good to store long-lasting potatoes in them."
"It's going to be winter soon, it might be too cold to sleep with just the mantle. I think it's good to purchase a blanket for master at least."

I agree with Arisa and Liza's opinions and allow them to buy those. Of course the blankets are for four people. Since Arisa saw some made from cottons in the marketplace, I permitted her to buy after hearing the price.

◇

I go to the alchemy shop alone, and buy a lot of painkiller and deodorant materials and recipe compilations. It's an extravagance worry, but when you're shopping without caring for the remaining money, maybe because there's no fun of hesitating, it's a bit lonely.

On the general guild, I listen for the progress of the request I asked from Nadi-san. Even though it has only been a day, it's already mostly complete. The rest weren't in home so she's going to go back tomorrow.
Nadi-san passes me something as I give her the reward. What she gave is a big basket filled with things like small bag with money, vegetables, sandals and various other.
Poor home gives vegetables or home industry product like sandals instead of money, even things like wood spoons and others. It seems that Nadi-san did say that rewards are unnecessary but she was given them before she could decline.
I tell her that I'm leaving Seryuu city tomorrow and I present her the rewards as a bonus.

"Satou-san, your next destination must be either royal capital or duke-sama

capital right?"
"No, I intend to go to the labyrinth city."
"There are a lot of demi-human in labyrinth city, life will be easy there."

Come to think of it, I haven't meet the most famous demi-human, the elves. I thought that Seryuu city should have them.

"That's right, I'd like to see the elves the most."

Nadi-san is showing a subtle expression hearing my reply.
She looks at the back and calls the manager. It's the old man who were always sleeping.

"Manager~ please come here for a bit."

The manager comes here while stroking his beard. He's much younger than I thought. He's a bit small and skinny, but he's a handsome man with a matching greenish black long hair.
The manager who got here doesn't say anyhing, Nadi-san lifts one side of his hair up. They're quite familiar.

Lookie lookie, she points her finger.
The manager's ear, the tip is a bit sharp. Is he demi-human too?

"Satou-san's reaction is too light."
"I'm sorry, what's wrong with manager-san's ear?"」

Nadi-san is mad after hearing my answer.

"Mou~ What are you saying, I'm showing you the proof since you said that you want to see an elf."
"Eh? He's an elf?　I thought that elves' ears are longer though?"

Is he a half-elf?
The manager-san looks grumpy from my reply. He goes back to his position and resumes his nap.
Looks like I've offended him with my answer somehow.

"Mou~ manager! Just because you were mistaken with long-ears tribe

(Booch), please don't immediately sulk!"
"What kind of tribe are long-ears tribe?　It's said that elves has ears this long from my hometown?"

I make a motion to express long ears with my finger.

"What Satou-san said is a tribe among ears tribe called long ears tribe (Booch). They're taller than normal people in average, and their hair is blond instead of green. They have talent in magic and live as long as the elves. The saga empire first emperor was an ears tribe and was a king of the hero, so the tribe is considered to be sacred. They seldom ever goes out of Saga's empire, since they even have a sanctuary there, so they're rarely seen. However, they're hated by the elves and is called 『False Elf』."

I see, let's not get it wrong next time.
I apologize to the manager for the rudeness. Since the manager answers by fluttering his hand while napping, I take that I'm forgiven.

◇

The next morning, we've finished having breakfast in the stalls. I have paid for the inn too.
Martha-chan said, "Stay here next time too～" as a carefree farewell, I leave the inn by driving the wagon.
<TLN: Operating? Or driving? Are you driving horses? or riding but he's not exactly riding on the horse.>

I thought that Zena-san will come to see me off, but she had an all nighter, she's probably still asleep. Let's send her a letter next time.

When we're departing I inadvertently see a white dot moving along the inner wall.
I greet the knight Soun at the gate entrance and leave the city. I'm troubling people if I wait here.

When I got a bit away from the gate, I hear, "Wait～", from behind.
Since I'd be a hindrance for the traffic here I go to an open space outside the

gate and stop the wagon.

The traffice at the gate looks to be in disorder when I look at it. One horse is slipping out from there. I wave my hands from the top of the wagon.

"Satou-san!"

Zena-san is coming here on a horse while smoothing her hair which got disheveled by the wind. She's wearing a dress unsuitable for riding a horse. She wears different cosmetic than the usual.

"I'm glad that I made it!"
"Zena-san, I'm also glad that I got to meet you before I leave."

It's good that I don't end up being ungrateful.

"You're going to the labyrinth city right? Please send me a letter when you've settled down. I will absolutely reply back!"
"Yes, I will wihout fail."

I thought that she'd say that she wants to go together, but I'm glad that it's about letters.
"Pinky swear~", Arisa shows her smirking face from the wagon while saying unnecessary words.

Zena-san bites it and vigorously asks for "I want to pinky swear!", I couldn't refuse and we pinky swear.
Doing it at this age, I'm a bit embarrassed.

I'll properly say farewell to Zena-san who stares at her bend little finger ecstatically.

"Then, let's meet again some other time! I will send you a letter for certain after I arrive at the labyrinth city."
"Yes! I'm looking forward to the day I'm be able to see you again."

It's good that it didn't become a sad farewell.
My reunion with her will happen faster than I thought, but I still don't know at this time.

Zena-san earnestly waves her hand until the knight Soun grabs her by the nape to the station.

Intermission: A Certain Master and His Vassal's Conversation

"--As has been said, with the cooperation of all temples and magicians, the labyrinth won't expand toward the city, and as long as the ceremony is maintained, the barrier will last. In the future, for the sake of reinforce the barrier, we'll build several holy monuments in the eastern district. Please sign these documents for securing those sites."

The white-haired official-- consul of the earl, Ortes, read the report while adjusting his monocle.

"Then, is it usable? That labyrinth?!"

A man bend his body forward on the desk while having a joyful look-- the earl of Seryuu.
Can the labyrinth be commercialized? He asked.

"The three great temple, Parion, Garleon and Tenion have conducted ceremonies to determine it and the result are 『ġēse』, 『ġīse』, and 『ġēse』. They're relatively favorable."

The consul stop there, and add, "However."

"Our experts have pointed out several problems."

"The first one must be about the entrance which is inside the city."
"That's exactly right. Other labyrinths have shown that monsters could overflow from it after some years. Therefore, it is necessary to have something to have blockades in case it happens."

"Additional walls outside the barrier huh... quite a lot of expense. Since we already have the quarry from 3 years ago, we only need the workers huh."
"Yes, and we have just secured women and men slaves who looks able from slave dealers."

The earl becomes dubious after hearing the consul.

"Do we need to buy slaves for this? Don't we have enough labor already?"
"The people have become agitated, we'll use the slaves until temporary walls are complete. After we have finished using them we could just put them in the mine. Or we could make the obedient ones to be soldiers."

The earl considers the prior investment before deciding. When the labyrinth is able to steadily supply magic cores, the economy of earldom will most likely quickly grow.

"Have you blocked the entrance for the time being?"
"Our experts said that it's dangerous to completely block it."
"The reason?"
"It could ruin a country they said."
"You mean 『The Nightmare of Ishtan』? I thought it was just a myth, did it actually happen?"

There was a country called Ishtan 200 years ago. The country suffered significant damage from monsters that emerged from a labyrinth. The king who was worried with that invited a famous magician to seal off the entrance of the labyrinth. For safely closing the labyrinth and made the monsters threat disappear, the king was hailed as the wise king. However, 10 years later, the seal was broken by tsunami of monsters which overflowed from it and destroyed the entire country in a day.

"Wasn't Ishtan safe for 10 years? Then it should be alright to close it off for a bit while right?"
"Yes, we can't guarantee it but it's most likely fine."
"Alright, then close the labyrinth's entrance after the inner walls' construction is finished."
"I will arrange it at once. Please sign this document."

The consul presents the document which he has prepared it beforehand. The earl signs while reading it and continues to talk with the consul.

"There's another problem in regard with the labyrinth."
"What is it?"
"The Dungeon Master was the senior demon who had attacked this castle

some times ago."

The earl breaks his intense expression, and ask the consul expressionless.

"Is that definitive?"
"Yes, a magic soldier who participated with the castle's defense was on the spot. Furthermore, the assistant priest of Garleon, Nebinen, testified for the power of the demon."
"Fumu, we don't know the demon's goal but we've obtained the answers from the oracle. It can't be helped if we're anxious."

The consul furrows his brow a bit, but regains his composure.

"We're obliged to tell the king about the labyrinth, how will you choose the representatives?"
"Yeah, if I'm not mistaken one of the survivor of the labyrinth is a noble."
"It's viscount Belton."
"Then let's make Belton with several officials to be ones."
"I understand. I'll send a messenger to inform Viscount Belton."

The consul summons his subordinate and tell him to prepare the letter for the Viscount while adjusting his monocle.
The report itself has actually been sent to the kingdom with the magic mirror. But it's considered proper for a noble to be the messenger for reporting directly to the king.

"Were those all the things about the labyrinth?"

The earl is confirming while stroking his goatee which doesn't really suit him.

"No, I was wondering if we could send inspection teams to the labyrinth city, Selbira."
"Learning from the pioneer huh. How many do you suppose we should send?"
"Four groups consisting of two military units groups, a merchants group and a general citizens group would be good. Let's make them bring back the know-how about the public order problem, tax, and structure of explorer guild. If possible, I'd like them to invite some high ranking explorers to

investigate our labyrinth's rank."
"General citizen? Is there any meaning in sending commoners?"

The earl asks dubiously.

"It's my bad for calling them general citizens. I mean to say 'people who are knowledgeable about the streets.'"

The earl who seemingly agree with the consul's answer exaggeratedly gives permission.

"Excellent, I'll leave personnels' selection to you. Tell me when you have your candidates."
"I respectfully accept it."

◇

"Were you able to grasp the identity of the silver masked hero?"

The public call him hero, but no one know his identity. Since the earl cannot overlook an existence that could equal senior demon hiding in this city, he did not only make his formal investigators but also the consul's spy to investigate.

"We have succeeded in narrowing down the candidates, but we're lacking conclusive evidence."
"Who and who?"

"The first candidate is Sir Kigori from the knight. He has body reinforcement magic and herculean-strength skill. He was off duty so he stayed at home during that day. There are many other things that match like his long blond hair, but he should has been boasting more if he was really the silver mask."
"Right, he's a narcissistic man isn't he?"

"The second candidate is Yasaku-shi the explorer. He's a level 45 warrior. He's not only high-leveled but also equipped with various strong magic

tools, so he could possibly endure the demon's attacks. He's accustomed with fighting monsters and demons. However, his hair is black."
"What is such man doing in this kind of frontier place?"
"Your excellency, please stop belittling your own territory."

The earl is laughing while expressing his gratitude.

"His aim is probably dragon scales from the Dragon's Valley."
"Is he suicidal?"
"No, what I said isn''t exactly right, he's probably aiming for dragons which are nesting away from the dragon's valley. As one would expect, he couldn't possibly come back alive if he goes to the Dragon's Valley."
"Yeah, it'd be over just by the scales tribe before he could even meet the dragon."

The consul clears his throat and goes back to the discussion.

"The conversation had wandered off. The third candidate is Yasaku-shi's companion, the magic swordsman, Tan-shi. His level is high at 42, and he's probably used with dealing with demon like Yasaku-shi. He's a blond, but he can't possibly fought the senior demon while being only able to use body reinforcing magic."
"Right, it's not like the opponent is unaffected by magic."
"Moreover, explorers usually fight in party."

After being lost in thought for a while,

"I see, certainly we're lacking the decisive evidence to ascertain who the silver mask is."
"Yes."

"Is there no other candidate?"
"It's not like there isn't, but beside the three above, it's impossible judging by their ability..."
"They might be hiding their true ability you know?"

The earl is grinning.

"There are four people who were omitted from candidacy. The first one is

the Earl predecessor's bastard child, Ratts-dono. He was present in both uproars. His hair and height match the condition. He also has the need to hide his true ability and identity. That said, someone like him probably remained as a spectator until the end."
"That's right, brother-in-law is that kind of guy."

The villainous face of his brother-in-law floats in the earl's mind. It looks like a villain compared to the real person, probably because of the long discord between them.
He's not related with the silver mask, but since he was present during both the incident with the demon, the earl orders the consul to keep an eye on him.

"The second one is the alchemist, Akabana-dono. He wore the same robe as the silver mask, he even had the silver mask in his house. He was present at the day of the uproar, showing his face on the relief station."
"Hou? That's suspicious."

The consul shakes his head at the earl's words.

"However, silver mask isn't an uncommon thing. Because it's used during harvest festival to ward off demon, there are probably more than 10 shops which sell it."
"Fumu, was it a man who was fighting?"
"No, the figure was slim and the skin was abnormally pale that it didn't match the strength the silver mask was showing. A friend of mine testified that."
"Maybe he drank medicine that could change his body?"
"The elder confirm the existence of such medicine but the feedback reaction is too strong that it's suicidal for healthy person to drink it."
"Is that so."

Even if it's possible, if the medicine makes your body handicapped then there would be no meaning in fighting. The earl thinks so and moves his interest to the next candidate.

"The third one is a man called Usu who's affiliated with a criminal guild called Brown Rat."
"It's a guy who's a polar opposite of a hero."

"This man had similar physique and hair and he was confirmed to be present during both uproars. Moreover, the one who was carrying the demon's arm during the rebellion uproar was this guy."
"Hou? Did he cut the demon's arm and got possessed by it?"
"The possibility exists."

The consul picks on thin document from the stack he's holding and gives it to the earl.

"A hypothesis has arrived from the elder. 'Wasn't the demon who possessed the man called Uusu different from the demon who attacked the castle?' He said."
"For two senior demons appeared at the same time, isn't that impossible?"
"Maybe they were demons who were in hiding in hope of creating a labyrinth, he said."

"And then they fought each other because one intruded another's territory is it?"
"It's written as such in the hypothesis."

"How much is the truth from what old man thunder said?"

The earl puts one hand on his chin while thinking.
If it was said by someone else then we would laugh at it together, but the elder that the consul refer-- the earl call him the old man thunder, is the leading magician in this territory and even in the kingdom he's among the five most powerful one. Even if what he said seemed absurd, it couldn't be ignored.

"Right then, since there's no evidence I can't say for sure, but if it's the truth then a lot of things would start to make sense."
"Like the abnormal endurance?"
"Yes. While fist fighting the demon, he received a concentrated attack from 30 magicians and came out unscathed. He couldn't be human."

It's possible with certain magic tool, but the earl and the consul have no idea about it.
The first three candidates who were mentioned cannot clear this condition too, so they are exempted.

"If he's a demon, then that question is solved huh."
"The knight leader who was commanding also reported that, 『He was strong without no doubt, but his movement was like an amateur.』."
"A senior demon who isn't used to fighting huh..."
"Or maybe, it was confused with the difference of the possessed body compared with its real body...."

If the other demons are able to hide themselves, then the threat can't be ignored.
The earl thinks so and translates it into action.

"Alright, arrest all members of Brown Rat guild. Thoroughly investigate everything about this man called Uusu."
"I understand."

◇

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot with the last candidate."

The consul pulls a report from the document stack.

"He's called Satou, a self-proclaimed merchant."
"Self-proclaimed?"
"Yes, the person introduced himself as a merchant but no one in the merchant guild knew him, and he didn't have any business activity during his visit to Seryuu city."

The earl who had his interest piqued chimed in.

"Is he a spy from other country?"
"No, his performance was too poor to be a spy. The only things he did after arriving at this city was just sightseeing and doing tryst with women. He seemed to be well-off but he did nothing but wild merrymaking."
"Sightseeing? In this place... a city with scarce tourist attraction?"
"Yes, it's a good way to check on the city's facilities and road as a way to confirm the nation's power, but it's too conspicuous."

"That's right, I've never seen anyone who goes on a tour in this Seryuu city."

The consul continues his talk after clearing his throat.

"This person is like the three earlier, he was present during both uproars, and was a survivor from the labyrinth."
"Self-proclaimed merchant, but actually an explorer eh?"

The earl finds it quite amusing.

"Well, according to viscount Belton, 『He was excellent at commanding the demi-human slaves, but the actual person himself was mediocre. He's a coward who didn't equip a sword, couldn't use magic, and only stealthily threw stones from behind the demi-human slaves.』, he said."
"Is that guy acquainted with viscount Belton?"
"Rather than an acquaintance, he's the man who rescued viscount Belton when he was caught by monster."
"Hou, should we give him some kind of medal?"
"I think it's unnecessary since the viscount himself is giving him rewards..."

The earl nods while getting back to the story.

"Even without fighting strength, he was able to escape from the labyrinth. We should consider that he has some kind of experience."
"Isn't it just because the demi-human slaves were strong?"
"From the Yamato stone check, they're all level 13, around the level of an average knight."

The consul reports it plainly. His expression doesn't show if he discriminate against demi-human.

"All of his slaves? It's not just one slave who is at the same level as an average knight?"
"Yes, the three are."
"That's some battle potentials."
"Yes, since they're demi-human slaves they're not allowed to have weapons inside the city so there's no problem with the public order, but it's extraordinary for a self-proclaimed merchant's guards."

The earl is contemplating while the consul waits for his master.

"A son of a noble, or a wealthy merchant's son... No, can't be, someone like that would have humans as their guards. The prince of the lost kingdom..."
"I think you're jumping to conclusion for that one."
"You're right, it's fun to guess his identity but there's no meaning to it."
"Yes."
"Let's scout for people to be put into the inspection team for labyrinth city."
"Are you serious about that?"
"Write the candidates."

"I understand."

◇

"Still, the day after he arrived at Seryuu city, he was at the spot where the demon attacked, moreover, the day after that, he was present during the rebellion, and again, he got dragged into the labyrinth. What an unlucky man."
"If that man is bringing in demons then we should expel him from this territory..."
"That can't be. Nebinen testified that he stopped the rebellion, found out the mastermind behind it and discerned the demon."

The earl raises his eyes after hearing the consul's report.

"He's quite an able man. If what Nebinen said isn't a lie..."
"It's not just Nebinen-dono, a magic soldier who was present also testified the same thing."

"Fumu, a mysterious man huh... I'm interested but I can't get free time to meet him."
"Yes, since you need to reorganize the territory army, rebuild the destroyed city, the isolation of the labyrinth and other things that keep piling."

The earl seemingly of doing mischief, grins while crooking his lips.

"About that medal earlier."
"Are you going to really give him one?"
"No, not medal, let's give him gentleman title."
"...court rank is it?"
<TLN: Not sure which rank is the earl is using, so this is going to be temporary although well...>

The consul is unusually shaken with the earl's world and his words is mixed with thorn.

"You don't mind right? It's a rank given to 10 people a year. We don't need to give him position or pension either. At most his privileges are being at the lowest seat of nobles and exempted of the tax."
"To give a person of unknown birth and parentage a rank, this vassal who has served for generations object."

The earl has anticipated the consul's objection and solemnly states his excuse.

"He saved the oldest member of that vassal, viscount Belton's life, stopped the rebellion, and uncovered the plot of the demon. Aren't those enough for achievements?"
"There is no objection to his achievements but..."
"Furthermore, I'm not giving him viscount or baron rank but a false noble rank of gentleman."

The consul realizes that the earl isn't serious from his expression.

"Please stop joking. Right now is the important time for the earldom to make rapid progress."
"Sorry, forgive me. I was having fun imagining how my vassal would look like if I give a vagabond a court rank..."

Admonished by the consul, the earl apologizes.
Having finished letting off the steam with the joke, the earl and his consul move to their next agenda. Their night is long.

Intermission: Friends of Yuni

I've made new friends today.

They're demi-human girls called Pochi-chan and Tama-chan.
All demi-humans that I've ever meet eyes were like stray cats ready to bare their fangs, they were scary. But those girls are different.

◇

My morning starts early, because I'd get scolded if I don't get to the gate inn before the dawn. When the sky begins to brighten, I leave the orphanage to the main street.
It's dim, but I'm not afraid. Because I'm with other children who are running toward their job's place.

I enter through the back door since the big gate for carriages is closed. The back door is also closed, but for the short me, I can just slip through the small gap.

I head to the staff door through the courtyard. The water is low when I peek at the water jugs. I must fill it before the landlady woke up!
I pick up a bucket and go to the well.

"Kuu~~~~~, heavy~~~~."

Hanging on my body weight, I pull the rope connected with the bucket.
Drawing water is a hard labor. Especially for someone as light like me.
I wonder if the day will come when I can draw water effortlessly like Martha-san?

"Intruder~?"
"Suspicious person nano desu~."

I was surprised by voices from the dark and let go off the ropes.

Ah, even though I was about to succeed...

I turn toward where the voices came from.
From there 4 lights are floating out together with carefree voices!

"Kyaa-----!"
"Unyaa----"
"Nyuu----"

I wasn't able to suppress my scream. But anyone would be surprised if they were in the dark.
Encouraged by that fact, I harshly scold at the someones who are in the dark.

"Don't raise your voice suddenly! I'll have to draw again now!"

"Sorry~?"
"Nano desu~."

Those someones frankly apologizing making me losing my tension.
The sun gradually rises and I can see the faces of those girls.

Those girls are beast-men.

◇

I was surprised at first and shouted, "Don't come here!".
But Pochi and Tama didn't mind it.

"I'll help~""Nodesu~."

Saying so, they begin pulling water in place of me. Pochi quickly pulls the rope like a joke.
I wonder just how strong beast-men children are. Or maybe these girls are special?

After Pochi is finished drawing the water, this time Tama says, "Unfair~?

Tama will also do it~", and begins drawing water. These girls must have thought that this is a play or something!

Oh god I'm sorry, Yuni is a bad girl.
I use the two who are happily playing around until the bucket is full of water. Moreover, not only drawing, they also help me carrying the water.

As a thanks, I will share today's meal with these girls.

◇

I break apart the black bread I've received as breakfast and bring it to the two with soup.
The work here is hard but it's nice because I get delicious meal.

Even without garnish, the soup is far better than the thin soup that is occasionally served on the orphanage, even the slightly sour black beard goes well with it.

There's no the bittt~er steamed gabo fruit or pickled gabo leaves as the only meal!

The two will surely be delighted!

While thinking so, I go to the stable.

There's a big lizard-man woman beside the two girls there!
I'm scared enough to almost drop the soup bowl, but I can't waste the important meal! I frantically bear it.

"Yuni~?""Nano desu~."

The two girls welcome me.

But, wait?

Hey, what are those in your hands?

"Meat~?""Cheese nano desu~."

No way~~~~!
Eh? Eh? That's a lie right?
You can't eat meat even after so many years right?

How do slaves, two demi-human slaves at that, get that kind of expensive thing?
Furthermore, it's quite a big lump!? Huh?

I hold out to keep my drool.
It came out a bit but I immediately wipe it.

"I thought I'd eat with you together..."

'I'll share you this', giving like I'm above them, would be quite comical.

"Ara, aren't you the errand girl? What's your name again? Since you're here already, why don't we eat together?"

From behind the lizard girl, two girls come out. The who started talking is a violet-haired girl of the same age as me, and the other is a black-haired Onee-san with regrettable face.

The violet-haired girl, talks in a really bossy way that I wonder if she's really the same age as me, but she, Arisa, is. She cut the dried meat and cheese lumps and shares it with me.

The lizard girl, called Liza, is going to say something but, Arisa says, "It's fine, the little girl's share is trivial. Master will surely consent! If he's mad then I'll be the only one who'd get scolded, moumantai.", and Liza-san understands. I don't really understand what Arisa is saying but now is the time to savor the taste of these meat and cheese.
I puff my cheeks like a squirrel while thoroughly enjoying the taste many times over. I'm sure that I'll remember this day for a while, and I'm confident that even gabo fruits would taste like meat and cheese!
◇

Rather than dividing my meal as a thanks, I got to eat delicious things instead.
Furthermore, after the meal, Pochi and Tama help me taking care of the horses. The two are really strong.
Even Liza-san who was bored, helps changing the litter boxes of the horses.

I thought that demi-humans are scary, was I wrong?

◇

There are good things and also bad things.
The landlady told me and Martha to buy firewoods from the lumber shop.

Umm?　Do we really have to bring this two bundles to the inn?
Martha-san says, "Yosh! Let's do our best~." but you won't be able to easily carry it you know?

Still, I'm an employee, I won't complain. If I carelessly complain I might get fired, and I don't know if I could get another job then. In the future, if possible I don't want to become a courtesan at the street corner.

I lift the firewoods with all my power.
My feet are staggering, but I won't lose.
Since Marthan-chan is carrying bundle of firewoods even bigger than mine!

Carrying the firewoods.

Yes, carrying it.

...Carrying firewoods.

When I'm about to faint, the weight is suddenly no more.

I look up and an unknown man has taken my firewoods.
No, don't take it! I must bring that home!

Before I could complain, Martha-san thanks him.
I said he's unknown, but when I look at him again, it turns out that he's a guest on the inn. He's the person who gave me tips lavishly just by bringing water to his room this morning. It seems he's called Satou-san.

Satou-san not only carry my firewoods but also Martha-san's.
A man is strong after all. He's carrying it without breaking a sweat. I didn't notice it before, but Pochi and Tama who are carrying big rucksacks are together with him. So the master of the two is this man. It might be good to be a slave of this man, I'm thinking such.

◇

When I get back to the inn, I continue to take care of the horses. Pochi and Tama also help me like in the morning.

That's okay.

It's okay?

But.

"Please don't, I'd be scolded by the landlady if I let a guest helps me!"

For the master who's wearing such expensive-looking robe, please don't help me taking care of the horses.

Please stop with that disappointed face.
It's like I'm doing something bad!

◇

"Plate!"

I declare so and flip the card.

The plate is drawn on the back.

"Yes~ this is the third!"

I carefully collect the card that I worked hard to get.

This is a tool for learning letters it seems. At first, Martha-san who can read letter was teaching us but in the middle, Arisa devised this play.

After that, everyone is engrossed with it! This is the first time I've done this play.
I've always wanted to learn how to read letters, but it was like saying, "I want to fly on the sky". It was such dream-like things....

But now it's different!
Only in a few hours, I've learned how to read 7 letters!

◇

Fun thing doesn't last for long they said, but this is too much.
Even though I've made new friends, tomorrow Pochi and Tama are going to leave this Seryuu city.

But I've made a promise to the two. I will absolutely learn words and write them a letter!
I don't know the cost to send a letter, but I have a secret saving of two copper coins. If I have this much, then I should be able to send a letter.

In the evening, when I've finished my work, Satou-san gives me a bag full of wood blocks. When I look inside, although they're a bit poor, they're the same thing as the learning cards.
He says, "It's a thank you for getting along with our girls.", and gives it to me. I want to thank him immediately, but I don't know how to express this gratitude.

◇

Oh yes, the wood-block cards that Satou-san gave become extremely popular at the orphanage. Some interested older children asked for woods waste from the lumber shop and the children who are good with arts drew the pictures.

Even though a week hasn't passed since then, we have already finished making 3 sets.

It'd be nice if everyone becomes able to read letters in one year~
That's my dream.

It's nice if that really happen.
The work is hard as always, but after that day, I'm seeing more happy dreams each day.

Death March

- Volume 5 -

5-1. Journey (1)

Satou's here. Typically in a game, it's walking in the beginning, carriage in the middle and teleportation or airship in the endgame, getting convenient as it goes.

A friend said that going on an adventure in a carriage is miserable.
Since this isn't an adventure, I guess it's okay to enjoy myself right?

◇

The wagon makes clattering and rumbling noise as it travels through the highway between hills.

"Uuu~."
"Nya~."

Whenever small animals like rabbits and rats show up near the bushes, Pochi and Tama react as if they're going to jump out of the wagon. Every time it happened, Liza seized the two by their waists. Alhough the wagon is only about 20 Km/H fast, so they won't get hurt even if they jump out.

"Pochi, Tama, you'll fall if you lean over too much, sit on the back of the coachman's stand."

"Yes nano desu."
"Ay~."

The two reply with good answers and place themselves on the left and right sides of the coachman's stand.
Though it's probably only until they find something else.

The winds are slightly cold, but since it's cloudless the warmth from the sunlight is pleasant.
After we got out of Seryuu city for a while, we came into a forest, or rather,

a gathering of branching thickets. We came out of it after 1 hour, and now we're advancing through what you'd call hilly areas.
I could see shepherds herding their sheep on the other side of the hills sometimes. I've only seen goat-made products in the city, but there are shepherds too huh.

Gakon. Gakokokon.

The wagon shakes as the wheels are climbing up. From behind, I'm hearing Lulu's small shriek, and Arisa's abusive languages, but I'll pretend that I didn't hear it and let it carried away by the wind.

Since the highway is made to avoid the hills, it's winding. The ground is not paved with stone pavements, the soils are bare. As a result, the wheels stumble into rough spots several times. Although the horses are just moving along the course of the road by themselves, it's the coachman's job to fine tune the wagon.
Even though I'm supported by skill, due to the lack of my actual experience I couldn't avoid them all.

Arisa climbs above Pochi's head and shows her face from behind (me).

"I'd love for you to drive more carefully~."
"Don't be unreasonable to a novice coachman."

I put aside Arisa's protest irresponsibly. Pochi looks troubled with Arisa who nests on top of her head.
Oh, Pochi is counterattacking, she catches Arisa's hands and playfully bites it.

"W, wait Pochi, stop that. The sleeves will get sticky with drools~."
"Hamumu, nyanoresu~."

Arisa who pulls her arm back and Pochi who hounds her rush toward the luggage rack near the coachman's stand.
"Don't get rowdy now~", I warn them lightly. The wagon is shaking, it'd be bad if they fall.
Tama who sees Arisa and Pochi playing around looks raring to go.

Ah, Tama also participates in the war.
Since Tama isn't suited for patience or perseverance, I guess this can't be helped.

◇

The trip is more relaxed than I thought it'd be. Since this is a fantasy world, I thought that we would encounter some monsters or something, but there weren't any even up to now.
I tried searching in wide area but there were no dangerous animal or monster. At most it was just foxes. I spot packs of wolves sometimes but they're 10 kilometers away at the edge of the forest earlier, so there's no need to be vigilant for the time being.

When I went on a date with Zena-san back then, she said that the military is doing practice by regularly eliminate dangerous animals and monsters around the perimeter of Seryuu city. This is probably thanks to that.

Liza who seemingly couldn't let the little girls who were still playing around any longer, warns them. I had thought that they should be stopped soon, so it's helpful.

Replacing Liza, Lulu who took refuges on the back of the wagon sitting behind me.
Come to think of it, I haven't talk with Lulu much. Communication is important, let's talk with her properly from now on.

"Lulu, are you fine? You don't have motion sickness or the like right?"
"Y, yes!"

I thought that she wouldn't reply, but quite a surprised voice came out.
Right, she moved behind me silently, so she would be surprised if I call her out without turning my head.

The beastkin girls have high physical abilities and I thought that it's natural, but for Lulu who is just a normal girl, it would be surprising. I've almost replaced my common sense with unreasonableness--- I should be careful.

"You don't have to be so nervous. Just like Arisa--- or rather not, be more like Pochi and the girls who casually interact with me."
"Such things... Since I'm slave, it's unbecoming."

Lulu lets out a faint voice that sound as if she's about to disappear, seem like this will need some time.
For the time being, I should get her to get accustomed with having conversations with me.

"Lulu, do you have anything you like?"
"I like taking care of Arisa."

Is she a siscon? No, it's probably just a normal sisterly love.
I'm reluctant, but I continue to talk about Arisa as the topic. To clear away her reserved attitude, it's important to continue the conversations no matter the topic.

"You really love your younger sister."
"I sometimes question who is the older one."
"Certainly, she really doesn't act like a 11 years-old."
"Arisa is a genius since she was a child."
"How was she?"

Rather than genius, it was because she had the experience from her previous life, but I'd better not talk about it huh?
After that, Lulu continues to brag about Arisa happily until noon. Humans are good at speaking about the thing they love, this is no different even in another world.

Lulu who talks about Arisa, looks very happy. Her eyes are sparkling, her cheeks faintly blush too. Her face which is normally that of beautiful girl, gets even more beautiful. I'm scared that I would fall into a dangerous world (lolicon) if I'm careless.

I could hear Arisa who seems to be in agony for being praised very highly behind but maybe because she understands my intention, it doesn't seem like she would interrupt Lulu's story.

When the wagon goes on a straight line for a while I look at the luggage rack. Arisa is writhing on the floor while Pochi and Tama are mimicking her by lying down on the sides. Noticing my gaze, the two look toward here while still on their mimicking position. I gesture that it's nothing, and then they resume to imitate Arisa happily.
Yup, peaceful is nice~.

Then, Lulu continues to talk about Arisa for nearly one hour after that.

◇

Let's change the story since Lulu's voice started to become hoarse.
Of course, I'm ready to hear Lulu's talk about Arisa anytime. Let's make Arisa participate if I need to punish her.

Just as I try to get the timing, I hear a cute growl from the side.
Confirming on the menu, it's about time for lunch. We could eat in the wagon as it continues but I want to check on the condition of the horses fixtures so I decide to take a break for the lunch. It's not like we are in a rush, and we won't reach town for two or three days anyway.

According to the map, there's a boulders formation just up ahead, so I pick that place for the break.

"Let's have a lunch soon."
"Meal~?""Meat nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama answer faster than Lulu who has become red on my side.
Jumping from back of the wagon, a girl shows her face.

"Shall I cut some cheeses and breads if we're going to eat in the wagon?"

Liza, weren't you just keeping watches on the back of the wagon?
Arisa who has revived follow after Liza. Her voice has become hoarse while her hair is in disorder, she's a bit scary.

"We have a nice weather today, let's eat like we're having a picnic~."

"That's right. Looks like that there's a boulders formation up ahead, let's take a break for 1 hour there."

After that we advance through the road for awhile, in the middle of the way we get out of the highway and climb a hill. The carriage shakes and loses its speed because the ground is underdeveloped grasslands. I advance the wagon carefully.

Soon, we can see the boulders.
Each and every one of them is quite big. The boulders are about 2 meter high and nearly 7 meter wide.

I stop the wagon near on the side of a boulder.
I descend from the coachman's stand, and help Lulu to get off it.

Arisa jump toward me while saying, "Tou!", like some kind of hero, I avoid her.

"Wait~ Aren't your treatment toward me getting worse?"

"That's not true at all. You're cute Arisa.", I answer half-heartedly, and lowered the fixture of the wagon.

"You didn't put your heart into it! You'll stray off the path of delinquent soon~"

Your vocabularies reeks of Showa era like usual.
Pochi and Tama also imitate Arisa, "Tou~?""Tou nano desu~", they're jumping while saying that. It's good that they didn't imitate the pose.

I release the yokes on the horse and tie the veins on the wagon. I check on the fixture of the wagon, and it seems that the horses bodies don't have scratch so it's fine.

Liza comes down with a barrel filled with water, I give it to the horses. I'll give them the priority because they're the ones who work the hardest today.

"Liza, prepare something that's easy to make like sandwich or salad."

I ask Liza for the meal.
Since it's bad to only have Liza to do it, let's try to see whether Lulu or Arisa can cook.

"Unfortunately, Arisa's female power level isn't high enough for cooking."

Arisa said so in monotone while looking toward the day after tomorrow. Is she feeling guilty? I won't say such old-fashioned thing like a woman have to be able to cook, okay.

"I've no experience in cooking, but I could do things like peeling fruits or making tea."
"Then, Lulu will act as Liza's assistant. Help her cooking by following her instruction."
"Yes! I will do my best."

I ask Lulu to help Liza. I wonder if she's happy for being helpful, I feel like she could get her voice out more around me like she has accustomed to me. I wonder if it's too early to think that?

Should I ask Pochi and Tama to collect firewood?
When I look at the two, they're exuding atmosphere like they're about to run toward the meadow. Their faces turn to me, but their ears twitches every time the bushes make sound.
Let's occasionally let them play appropriate for their age~.

"Private Pochi! Private Tama!"
"Ay!"
"Yes nanodesu!"

Good answers.

"I will assign you two a mission! Check the security around the perimeter of the boulders!"
"Ay!""Desu!"

The two begin to run like arrows. Let's remind them, "I'll call you two back when the meal is ready, so don't go too far~", so they won't overdo it.

I guess I'll make Arisa to collect the fuel.

"Arisa, gather things like dead leaves and firewood near the bushes around here."
"Kay~."

I direct Arisa as I give salts to the horses. Arisa who doesn't have any particular complaint go to gather the firewood while singing some minor anime-like songs.

5-2. Journey (2)

Satou's here. Hiking is nice, isn't it. When you're surrounded by nature, fully inhaling the scents of the trees and the plants, you completely forget about all the unpleasant affairs at work.

◇

After I've finished taking care of the horses, I begin to compound for deodorants behind the wagon. I want to do something about the intense smells of the goat leather and wool.

During compounding, Liza come to ask if the meal is fine without soup since the firewood isn't enough. It's cold, and the black bread without the soup would be too hard.
I catch a sight of the Light Hot Plate beside me which I've used to heat water for compounding.
I decided to use this to help for cooking. After heating the soup with this, you could put the burning firewood until it's boiled. I'll leave the magic supply for Light Hot Plate to Arisa.

Still, I didn't think that gathering for fuel would be this hard. I should have bought them in Seryuu city.
I'll take out scrap woods from the Storage if we get in a pinch. The fact that the Item Box could only store item with particular size is a bottleneck.

◇

I, who have been making deodorant behind the wagon, could smell the nice aroma from the soup. The finished deodorant is in the form of a white powder. I put it in a small bag and it seems that you used it by mixing it together with the smell source.

I take out the goat leathers and wools from the storage and put them inside the Item Box in a small sack with the deodorant. Since they were too many to get inside, I leveled up the Item Box skill level to 4.

Liza comes to say that the meal is ready exactly right after I've finished my business even though she probably didn't watch me.

Now then, since the meal is ready I should call Pochi and Tama back.
I call them in loud voice.

Yup, let's buy a whistle when we get to a town.
I do have whistles in my Storage but it'd be disastrous if I blow it and make a kaijuu or an angel appear, so I won't.

"A prey nano desu~."

Pochi comes back while boastfully presenting a rabbit on her hand. The ears are short for a rabbit. According the AR, it's called Short-eared Rabbit. Pochi is dirtied with grass and mud from the top of her head to her foot, but she's smiling nicely.

I relay the rabbit I've received to Liza.
I praise Pochi while stroking her head. Since I can't let her have a lunch like she is, I put water to a bucket and wash her face and arms with it. I've made this policy from the time we were in the labyrinth before we had meals, so when she's presented with the water bucket, she's splashing the water around. Lastly, she shakes her head to remove the water without using a towel. This habit of her is irreparable it seems.

"Meat~? I've brought it~."

This time it's Tama who has come back, her voice comes from behind.
I wonder what did Tama catch? Is it a bird~?

"Meat! ...nano desu?", Pochi tilt her head in puzzle midway.

When I turn back, the thing that Tama holds is an about 80-cm high rat... or not. The AR shows that it's a rat-man.

The rat-man seems to be unconscious, but at least he's still alive.

"Tama, please let that one go."

While looking a bit sad, Tama says, "Prey~ No good~?", she's coming here while tilting her head.
I almost allow it involuntarily, but let's not eat men. I should teach her about this gradually.

"You'll hurt your stomach, so no."
"Aye~."

Tama begins to spin on spot while still holding the rat-man. Then, she throws the rat-man across the meadow.

Oioi, that was too wild no matter how you look at it.

The rat-man has its HP decreased by a little, but it seems to be alive.
Since we treated him too rough, I decided to check if he has any external wounds. Before that, I scold Tama properly.

The rat-man doesn't seems to have any injury. According to AR, he doesn't have any skill, age 2. As expected of rats, they grow fast. He's grasping something that look like a ball of mud on his hand, but, since I have no interest on it, I leave it alone. It's probably this child's boxed lunch.
Since he only seems to have fainted, I put him on a meadow a bit away from our camp. I put several fruits beside him as a remuneration for the trouble.

On the other hand, Liza has quickly dismantled the rabbit that Pochi caught and she is grilling it now. The entrails that has been washed then properly cut into tiny pieces by Liza, and fried together with some herbs.
By the way, we're using a dead tree from the other side of the boulder found by Tama as the fuel.

"My stomach is hungry nodesu~."
"Copycat is bad nano desu~."
"Meat~ nano desu~."

Arisa demands for lunch while imitating as Pochi. Pochi protests at her,

Tama follows suit.
...this is slightly amusing nanodesu.

Since the rat-man doesn't seem like he'll wake up, we decided to begin our meal.

Liza holds out the biggest piece of meat.
I pass it to Pochi because she's the MVP this time. The second biggest one is given to Tama. She was no good with the prey, but she played an active role in securing the firewood.

The meat of the rabbit is tender and delicious. I don't know if whether this is because of Liza being good at cooking or the fresh ingredient, but good food is good food.
I'm offered the herb fried entrails, but since the meat is enough, I decline.

Kasakasa.

Even if I don't look at the direction of the sounds, I know from the radar that the rat-man who has awakened runs away. When I check on it later, the fruits has been properly taken away.

◇

I'm enjoying a tea break with Liza and Lulu after the meal.
Lulu pours me the tea. She was taught in the royal court even if it was just a small country, so the tea made by Lulu is on different level than the one I usually drank. Truly delicious.
Seemingly not at all dissatisfied when I praise her, even while acting humble, her face is smiling.

Arisa follows Pochi and Tama along to go on a sightseeing of the boulders.
The person itself said, "I'm surveying", of course, but I could only saw pleasure trip on her mind from her tension.

I search the map while enjoying the tea's aroma.

I tried to look for rat-men, but the only rat-man around here is the child earlier. I wonder if he's a lost child?

From the map, there's a hidden village dozen of kilometer away southeast from here, so he's probably a lost child from a rat-man village outside of the earl's territory. Fortunately the lost child is running into the direction of the village, and the dangerous animals are only foxes, so he's probably going to be okay even left alone.

Since I was only searching for monsters' special attacks or level earlier, I had missed the rat-man. There might be thieves too, so I make an adjustment to the search pattern.

Mumumu, there are thieves. Although there is quite a distance, and the highway is separated from the southeast mountain so we probably won't encounter them anytime soon.

Uoh!
When I narrowed it further, red dots begin to rapidly appear on the screen, but there's nothing when I look around.
Normally insects or small animals won't be shown since I've made it OFF by default.

When I face toward the nearby red dot, something is escaping.

Is it a small animal looking for leftovers? If this was a game, then, animals which likely won't be enemies would be excluded from the start. This is troublesome.
I guess I should exclude anything with level 1 without poison. They won't hurt even if they bite anyway.

Alright, I've excluded anything without poison or special abilities.

Hm~mm, the red dots still isn't decreasing.
No wait, when I look better, are those insects? Mosquito-like insects are flying. Furthermore, they have [Race Characteristic: Blood-sucking]. Right, mosquitoes suck blood, don't they?

Let's put aside this setting only for when we go to mountain or thickets, and

exclude anything beside thing with poison in normal situation. I'll do something about creature I see for the first time with AR. If they're level 1 then elimination them is trivial anyway.

◇

When I'm just about to finish the adjustment, I could hear Arisa's voice calling me from the top of the boulder.
How did she climb that up?

"Is there anything?"
"A bit, come up on top of this rock."

Pochi come backs from the back of the boulder while piggybacking Tama.
Apparently, Arisa had made this two to be the stepping stone to go above.

"Arisa is unfair~."
"Pochi also wants to go up nodesu."
<TLN: Yes, this isn't a typo. Pochi occasionally doesn't use 'nano desu' but 'no desu'. I guess it sounds awkward so I'll make it 'nodesu' whenever she does from no own.>

Arisa stretch her arm to reach out, but it's impossible to pull us with one arm.
Since the two people looks eager to go on top, I raise them in turn.

Although because I can't find scaffolds for myself, I jump up once to get there at a blind spot of Liza and Lulu.

"See it from here."

I look at the direction where Arisa points at.
I'm seeing collapsed boulders there. What does Arisa want me to see?

"What am I seeing?"
"Mou, look at it properly."

I see. I finally understand what Arisa wants to show.

"Are those stones from shrine's archway (torii)?"
<TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torii>
"I can only make conjectures since they've collapsed, but looks like there are 3 collapsed torii lined up. Maybe there was a shrine here."

I stare at the remains of the torii's stones. I tell Arisa the information from AR.
I thought that they were just traces of megalithic civilizations, but...

"It's a broken Travel Gate."

It's a well-known gimmick for shortcuts when you're traveling in a game. The ones here seems to have been broken since ancient times, so I don't know the how or if it's possible to repair.

Hearing that, Arisa enthusiastically says, "You can fix it?!" but I briefly answer, "Impossible."

It is attractive to have shortcuts like the one from games, but I'd like to refrain from jumping into an unknown location.
I didn't think too much about this before I become the person concerned, but I wonder why games' protagonists could so simple-mindedly go through gates.

It seems that the boulders has magic catalyst properties, they momentarily react when I try to pour it magic. Although I don't want it to end up with, [You've been trapped inside a stone], situation if it malfunction, so I'll stop acting rashly.

◇

Right after we depart, the three little girls went straight to the dreamland. As soon as the wagon started running, they immediately went asleep, probably because they're full. Arisa seems to have lost to her physical limit too.

"Master, could you possibly teach me how to drive the wagon?"
"That's fine, you can sit here."

I agree to Liza's request and make a space on the coachman stand.
It'd be helpful to have people who could drive the wagon beside me, let's teach the other members later.

"Do you want to try it too, Lulu?"
"Yes, I'd like to."

I tried to bring this matter to Lulu who's sitting right behind me, and unexpectedly got a good answer.
I stop the wagon for a moment, and change place with Lulu while holding the reins from the luggage rack. I make Lulu to sit on the coachman stand for training of her together with Liza.

"First, it's about the operation of reins."

I give Liza the reins first.

"Hold the reins a bit loose. But be careful not to make it too loose."

I teach the two like how Yosagu-san taught me.
The two only make minor errors which is normal for people who are tense, and have successfully learned how to drive.

Liza's driving is, though a bit rough, enough for a passing mark. She learned it several hours faster than me, and she's already at the level where she could replace me holding the reins.

>[Education Skill Acquired]

Lulu's driving is, although a bit more unreliable than Liza, fine enough to drive in a flat plain. It'd be fine if she practices it little by little.
While I and Liza watch over her, the wagon driven by Lulu shakes and rumbles while proceeding along the highway between the hills.

5-3. Black Mist

Satou's here. Although we have what we call pending plans, Death March won''t exist in this world if I could just smoothly schedule the minute details beforehand.

◇

"Yiss~ 10 straight victories!"
"It's only Arisa who wins, unfair~ Pochi also wants to win~."
"Tama too~"

I can hear the little girl's voices from behind. The members beside me have been playing the learning cards for about 2 hours.
Since I couldn't really look away, I don't know the details but it seems that Arisa has continue to childishly won.

"Arisa, here's the commemoration for 10 successive victories."
"What is it? A picture book?"
"If you could win that many, then you should be able to read it right?"
"Nnn~ I could probably do."
"Then read it for Pochi and Tama. If they're only studying the learning cards, they would get bored before they remember the letters."
"Aye aye."

At first Arisa was reluctant with the picture book I held out, but she finally consented and spread the book open on the floor.
Still, it's amazing that she could learn it in two days.

Pochi and Tama who were complaining since a while ago, quietly sat and perked their ears when the story began.

With nothing but Arisa reading the picture book as a BGM, the wagon continues advancing.

I ask for a change of coachman since I want to search the location for our

campsite today on the map.
I wanted to ask Liza at first, but since she's listening to Arisa's story with a serious face, I ask Lulu instead.

"Please handle the wagon for a bit."
"Yes, master."

I move to the edge of the coachman stand to make space for Lulu. I pass the reins, and want to concentrate on the map but from Lulu's point of view, I'd look like a master who sits beside her in silent... I don't want that.

I migrate to the luggage rack behind and lean my back on the stand.

I immediately look at the map to select the camping ground. Actually, I've thought of a several candidates before we started the journey, but unfortunately the distance we have traveled is shorter than I thought so they're unusable.

There are about 4 hours more before the nightfall.
If we run on this hill for about 3 hours then we'll get closer to the valley between the east and west mountains. According to the book that I've bought from the bookstore back then, [Journey to the Royal Capila], the valley up ahead is a difficult place so I want to make a camp before it.

From what I've seen on the map, there are two locations that could be used for it. The place up ahead has a pond nearby, should I go there?
Something like water spirits or aquatic monsters would usually appear in fantasy setting, but according to the map there are only big frogs there so it should be okay. Big frogs are different from giant frogs from the labyrinth; they're not monsters but just common amphibians.
I wonder where do you draw the line between monsters and normal creatures?

◇

"Master."

I got called out by Lulu who rarely does it.
Since her voice sounds a bit bewildered, I move the map to the edge of my view.

"What's wrong Lulu?"
"U, um, please look at that."

I put my face beside Lulu and look at the place she's pointing at, black mist is moving from one side of the southeast mountain.
Still, it's quite far. She did well to see them.

"Just a bit ago, birds were flying out from the side of that mountain so I was curious. Then, that black mist appeared."
"I wonder what is that?"

That place is beyond the scope of the map. I look hard there.
The AR indicate that it's [Unidentified Flying Insect Monsters]. The details don't appear because this AR is linked with the map.
Appraisal also doesn't work when I try to use it, it's probably outside of its effective range.

"What what? Is there something~?"
"Arisa, continue~?"
"Something nodesu?"

Arisa hangs over me, popping half of her body outside onto the coachman stand. Furthermore, Tama gets on top of Arisa.
I can only imagine this from the presence, but it seems that Pochi also got on them but she fell.

"There's black mist-looking thing over there."
"What's that?"
"It's black, so, Bats?"

Pochi is pressing forwards with her nose first on the narrow space between me and the wagon's canopy. I'd like to tell her that she's going in the reverse direction.
Our eyes meet for a while, then I open some space in front of me and fix Pochi's direction.

"Black lumpy is moving nodesu."

Oh, amazing. She could look at these distances?
If they're flying-type monsters then they could probably get here in 10 minutes.
In a moment, I decided that I'm going to move the wagon into hiding and go outside to see the situation.

"Lulu, call me if we get close to that forest you can see from here."
"Y, yes."

I put Arisa who was riding on my head beside Lulu.

"Arisa, observe the black mist's movement beside Lulu. Since that black mist might be monsters, get ready for battles."

Liza reacts to the word, 'monsters'.

"Pochi, Tama, get ready for battle."
"Aye aye sir~."
"Roger~ nanodesu."

Who taught them those words. Nah, I don't even need to hear it, there's only one truth like always.

Even though I said to get ready to battle, it's only for Liza to hold the spear and for Pochi and Tama to arm the swords. Tama passes pebbles for stone-throwing from the bag to Pochi.
I thought that her bag looks heavy, so there were those things inside huh.

Liza puts the stones she receives from the two on a small bag tied to her waist.
I take out a crossbow from the box and prepare it. Although I'm just preparing the bowstring. I haven't set the bolts, since it's dangerous.
After I confirmed that Liza and the girls' preparation is complete, I take out 3 additional crossbows and 200 bolts.

◇

"They're coming, a part of that black mist is moving."

It's still not in the map range. When I look at the mountain over Arisa's head, a part of the black mist on the foot of the mountain is certainly moving.
I change place with Lulu to be the coachman and make Arisa and her go back inside the wagon.

After Liza and the girls said that their preparation is complete, I accelerate the wagon.
Arisa asks me in low voice.

"Master, couldn't you see their level with Menu or something?"
"They're out of range. If I could get as close as 10 Km then I would know."
"I wish permission to use magics if the monsters get close."

I give permissions to use magics beside the uniques or the ones she used on the flea market.

"I want to use monster avoiding space (Dodge Field) too. I'd also like to have permission to use Sleep Wave, Sleep Field, and fatigue space <<Ennui Field>>."

I give permission after hearing the description of each magics.

"If the enemies are many, then make them sleep with the sleep magic."
"It's ineffective when the opponents are agitated."

Arisa said while smiling wryly. Then isn't there no meaning for that in battle?

"That's why I want to combo it with <<Ennui Field>>."
"Although you don't use it often, you sure have the knack for it."
"Yep~ But unfortunately, since it doesn't distinguish between friend or foe, it's only for the last resort."
"Don't you have means for direct attack?"

"I could use mind shock bullet (Psycho Ball) and mind shockwave (Shockwave), but at most it could only stun the opponents."
"If you cooperate with Liza, then those two attacks could be quite usable."

I give permissions to use the two magics.
I wonder what those crowds of monsters are chasing?

Monsters emerge from the edge of the map.

"Hexapedal boar (Dash Boar)?"

Rat-men are on the same position as them. The luminous points on the map are moving together. It seems that they're cavalry beasts. Their speed is near 50 Km/H. There are 5 of them.

"What are those?"
"The beasts that the rat-men ride to run away from that black mist."

The dash boars are level 5-6, the rat-men who ride them are level 3-7.
Their positions are bad, if we leave it as it is then they'll come from behind us.

The black mist enters the map range a few minutes late from the cavalries.

"The monsters coming from behind are called Flying Ant, they're only level 2-4 but they're troublesome because of their poison and acid attacks."
"Geh, are the poison and the acid lethal?"
"It seems that the acid burns. The poison is the paralyzing type, so it'd be fine if you're only bitten by one."

That said, if we get carelessly paralyzed, we'd be surrounded to death.
There are already 50 flying ants which have appeared chasing the rat-men.

When our talk is over, the rat cavalries break through the forest 200 meters away from us and cross the highway, missing the hill.
Alright, seems that they won't come here. While apologizing to the horses in my mind, I steel my heart and whip them. Me, Liza and the girls could deal with them, but it'd be dangerous for Lulu and the horses if they catch up.

I can hear loud striking sounds from the other side of the forest. There are 89 in total which chase the rat cavalries.

Let's just let them go past.
My optimistic thought ends when Arisa reports from behind.

"One of them is coming here."

5-4. Flying Ants (1)

Satou's here. A member of society with workaholic tendency, Satou.

It's not like I can't understand when people liken hard workers with ants, but I don't want to get along with dog-sized ants.

◇

I know from the radar that there is one flying ant coming here. Since there is a considerable speed difference, it's just a matter of time before it catches up.

"Lulu, evacuate from the coachman stand. Arisa, are you confident with your aim using the stun magics you mentioned earlier?"
"As long as the range is within 20 meters, it's fine."

I take out a cane from the back of the wagon-actually I take it from the Storage- and give it to Lulu who passes it to Arisa.

"Eh~ It's plain, but it's quite a good cane."

I won't speak of it, after all it's more expensive than Arisa.

"Shoot twice then fall back even if you miss and switch with Liza. Pochi and Tama will cover Liza."
"Kay~."
"I understand, master."

Pochi's and Tama's answers are a bit late.

"Nyu~?"
"Is it okay not to throw the stones?"

Oh yeah, I forgot about the throwing stones. Since I want to confirm the stun magics type for now, let's keep them as reserves.

"This time it's fine not to throw the stones. I want you to concentrate on the ant which got onto the wagon."
"Aye aye sir~."
"Roger~ nano desu."

The relative distance is under 100 meters.
The other ants are chasing after the rat cavalries who go toward the hill.

50 meters. Lulu who probably feels uneasy is grabbing the cuff of my clothes.

30 meters. The sound of the wings is approaching.

20 meters.

"Mind Shock Wave (Shock Wave)."
"It falls~?"
"Arisa, amazing nodesu."

The ant which got hit by Arisa's attack seems to have fallen onto the ground. Although according to the map, it's still alive. As expected of insects, they're not so soft as to die from crashing.

"The magic knocked it down, but it's not defeated yet. Though it's fine if we could just kill it before it woke up..."

Certainly, it'd want to return to its nest when it wakes up.

"Ants, lots of them nano desu!"
"Guh, it's impossible to link with these numbers~"

Pochi's voice is a bit late compared to the radar which shows red dots swarming here.
They're forming groups with 8 monsters in each of the 4 groups.

"It's a bit too many."
"Yeah, even if I successfully use Shock Wave, it'll probably only affect three of them."
"Can you fire it continuously?"
"I can't, the chants could make it in time, but I can't cancel it until I release the magic power."
"Pochi, Tama, restrain the enemies by throwing stones at both sides. If they come within Arisa's range, switch with her."

I could be the shooter too but it's impossible to leave the reins to Lulu, what should I do.

"It's Tama's tu~rn."
"I won't lose nodesu~."

I look back at the state of the backseat for a bit. Tama and Pochi are throwing stones. Liza supports them to recover their posture after throwing the stones.

"Did it hit~?"
"They're falling nodesu."
"Yosh, you did great, children! Shock Wave!."

It seems that they've shot down the first four enemies, and the radar reflects---following them, the enemies are decreased by four.
There are two enemies who caught up to the wagon from behind, but one of them is skewered by Liza's spear and the other one who jumped inside is skillfully dealt with by Pochi and Tama.
I'm guessing that's what happened from the noisy sounds from behind and the change of luminous points on the radar.

I can't afford to look back yet.
The ants are swarming on both sides of the wagon, I shoot any ants which go ahead on one side with magic pistol while ants which come from the other side get mercilessly kicked by me.
The kicked ant, becomes part of the scenery while scattering in pieces.

◇

The second wave of the ants is disposed with the same flow too.
But it seems that the ants have moderate intelligence, the third and the fourth waves are attacking from the shadow of the thickets on the left.

The ants are flying in parallel on both side of the thickets 300 meters away from us, it seems that they're waiting for chances. The range is not enough for the magic pistol.
I ease the wagon's speed and leave the reins to Lulu.

I take the crossbow leaned against the coachman stand, an put the bolt on the bowstring.
I can see the ants' bodies from the gap of the trees. I aim for the ant on the tail of the queue.

I aim at its future position---

Shoot.

"No matter how you look at it, you're just wasting arrows."

A luminous dot disappear from the radar.

"It's fine as feints. Arisa, I leave you to watch out for the back."
"Hoi!"

While talking, I shoot at the next ant. I can hardly believe it myself, but after this, every nocked arrow hit its target without fail. Along the way, we're about to leave the forested area, but it's too late. Every ant has been shot down before we passed the area through.

◇

"Lulu, it's okay to lower the speed now."
"Y, yes."

I put back the crossbow, and go to receive the reins from Lulu. Maybe because she holds it with all her might, her hands can't come off, I gently take her finger off the reins one by one.

"Sexual Harassment?"
"Not."

I was looking at Lulu's graceful hands, but I change to look at the inside of the wagon.
Arisa is looking here over her shoulder from the very back of the wagon. I don't have anything to feel guilty about, what an impolite girl.
I must tell everyone that the first stage of the battle is complete.

"Everyone, thank you for your hard work, we have successfully repelled the ants it seems."
"What about the ones before this forest area?"
"Seems that they've given up and returned."

I look behind and give everyone words of gratitude. Tama and Pochi are having an argument about the one who defeated the most enemies but Arisa boastfully says "I defeated 7 of them～♪".

"U, um, master... y, your hand."

I turn toward Lulu since I could hear her small voice beside me.
Oops, I've been holding her hand. This is really sexual harrasment then. I separate our hands and apologize to Lulu.
It feels like she's shy about it but doesn't dislike it, it must be my imagination though. I'm not a middle-schooler, I should have limits to misunderstanding.

"Is it fine if you let me be the coachman?"

Lulu asked in modest voice, as a result, I leave Lulu to be the coachman. I sit next to Lulu, open the map, and check on the state of the rat cavalries.

This is bad.

The rat cavalries are reduced to three, but they're going strong.
While bringing along the Flying Ants, they detour the hill by making a big arc.
And with their current course, they will surely cross with this wagon.
I change places with Lulu. I don't want to let Lulu sits on the direction where they will appear.

"The other rat cavalries seem to be coming here while bringing the flying ants. I'm sorry, but prepare for battle once again."
"How many are there?"
"52 ants."

It seems that the rat cavalries have managed to defeat five.
Those rat cavalries show up on top of the hill. I have a feeling that the rat-man with red helmet met eyes with me. The guy's dash boar is larger than the others. Enough to let two people onboard.

That rat cavalry approaches our wagon, and begins to run parallel with it.
The other two lower their speeds, seemingly to attract attention of the ants.
When it get beside the wagon, the rat-man lowers his helmet and shows his face, even though he has rat's face it's nihilistically handsome and looks like it's saying something.

"◆◆◆◆!　▼▼▼▼!　●●●●!"

>[Ash-Mouse Tribe Language Skill Acquired]
>[Green Scales Tribe Language Skill Acquired]
>[Elf Language Skill Acquired]

Somehow, I got various languages skills.
After thinking what could happen later, I decided to take the [Elf Language] skill. I raise it to level 3 and activate it.

"Human, words, don't you understand?!"
"Sorry, but, can you quickly get away? I don't want to get involved."

Even though I've purposely learned other language, the Shiga kingdom language came out. I complained back with Elf language, since I'd complain anyway even if I use Shiga language.

Putting me aside, I won't allow our girls to be in danger.

"Oh! You understand Elf language do you, then I have a request!"

Oioi, you're asking now after getting us involved?

"Please take care of the princess. If possible until she gets home, but if you can't then at least until you give her to the same tribe."

After saying that, the red helmet throws someone wrapped in thick coat he has been carrying to here.
I receive her in hurry. It seems that she has fainted.

When I look back, the red helmet has gone back to help the other two fight the ants.
I lay the girl in the wagon and go to very back where Arisa and the girls are.
Even without seeing the battle, their (the cavalries) luminous dots are already gone from the radar.

The red helmet most likely chose to die a honorable death. The girl earlier is probably that much important.
However, reality tramples on such thought.

An ant jumps on Arisa and the girls, and another one jumps on this wagon.

5-5. Flying Ants (2)

Satou's here. Shooting games were popular a long time ago, but I didn't play it. But since my work was related to FPS, I did play them in game shows...

◇

The flying ants formed groups of 8 ants and then start to head toward this wagon.

I pass 4 crossbows to everyone except Lulu who is handling the wagon, and give them a simple lecture for its operation.
Use the lever to pull the bowstring, then put the bolt on the rail and pull the trigger. If you don't think the hitting the target part, it is actually quite simple.

"Take a stance... shoot!"

Matching my signal, the bolts fly. The target is the approaching swarm.

Three ants were shot down. After setting the next bolts, we shoot once again. This time we hit two.

We won't make it for the next volley, but Arisa unleashes Shock Wave as we've arranged before, and shoots down the remaining three.

Because the next group is getting closer than the one before, after shooting one volley of bolts, we decrease their number with Shock Wave, and then, the remaining two ants fall prey to Liza's spear and my zero-distance bolt shot.

"Master, do you have any MP recovery medicine?"

I give three of it to Arisa. After receiving it, Arisa puts one hand on her waist and gulps down the energy drink in one breath.

"The next one is dangerous."

Yes, for the next wave, three groups are attacking at once. We are already shooting with bolts, but it doesn't look like they're decreasing. The saving grace is the fact that there's still some distance.

"Please give permission for me to use Over Boost. I could somehow do something to half of them."

During the pause of our conversation, Arisa gulps down another medicine.

"I understand, I permit you."
"Thank you, I love you."

Please don't raise a strange flag.
Arisa's light joke is a bit stiff.

"Over Boost!"

Matching Arisa's Command Words, light violet aura gusts forth.
She holds the long cane, and begins to chant orally.
The violet aura are forming great numbers of magic circle on the center of the long cane.

"■■■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■ Shock Wave"

An invisible shock wave tramples down upon the swarms of ants. The ants who got hit directly, different from what happened until now, die while spilling their bodily fluids from their heads. The other ants who got hit by the aftermath wave are also spinning around until they fall.
Even though Arisa said half, in actuality, all three of the groups become unable to fight. As expected of unique skills.

I gently catch Arisa who blacks out.

"My eyes are spinning~."

"Round and round~ nano desu."
"Perhaps this is the effect of Arisa's magic, I feel a bit dizzy."

The three seems unable to stand due to the after effect. I leave Arisa to Liza, and decide to clean up the remaining five ants which were late.
I have Lulu to stop the wagon.

"Pochi, Tama, pull the strings of the crossbows."
"Aye.""Desu."

The two looks exhausted, but they're doing their best to set up the crossbows.

Whenever I shoot the crossbow, I exchange it with the loaded one from Pochi or Tama.
This feels like Nagashino.
<TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nagashino>

After clearing the swarms up, I fire at high angle aiming at the fainted ants by confirming their position on the radar. I tried to mimic the protagonist from a manga I read long ago, but I didn't think that it would really hit. Because I have no scope, I shoot continuously at the relative position where the enemies are crowding while learning the fine-tune. Even if the hit rate is no more than 20%, it should be enough.

Several of the ants who got shot down in the beginning are still alive, but it's impossible to hit enemies who are two kilometers away after all. The bolts can't reach them.

◇

We're taking a short break to quench our and the horse's thirsts.

"It's tiring but it's good that everyone is safe."
"Tir~""ring nodesu."
"Arisa still isn't coming to, is she alright?"
"She'd be fine after a night's sleep."

Seen from the AR, Arisa's stamina and magic power which have became zero are gradually getting restored.
Lulu is wiping her sweats with a wet towel.

"Liza and the girls, please collect magic cores, stingers and poison glands."
"The stinger is clear, but I wonder which part is the poison gland."

Since it's hard to explain it, I demonstrate to them by dismantling an ant and show the location of poison gland.

"Put the stingers in this bag and the poison glands in this container. It's enough to just collect 5 of each. Please take care not to get poisoned while doing it."

The remaining ants far in the distance seem to be withdrawing, the dots are decreasing on the map.

I entrust the wagon to Lulu, while I'm compounding several [Antidote: Flying Ant] from the poison glands as the raw materials. One of them could be made into five antidotes.

I lower the "Princess" the red helmet left from the wagon, and put her beside me while I'm compounding. I could put her on the bare ground, but then it'd feel like I'm abusing a child so I spread a sheet on the ground for her.

"Master, Arisa has awoken."
"Wait, no~ Didn't I say that you should tell 『Arisa isn't waking up.』 to master, and guide him to give me MP recovery medicine by mouth~."

It's really Arisa-like, but what are you doing exposing your own evil intention.
Since she did her best today, let's pardon her with just a forehead poke.

Arisa come from inside the wagon borrowing on Lulu's shoulder. She opens her arm and says, "Help me down", so I help her to get down.
Sure enough, she clings on my neck when she's getting down-- That's a feint, her real aim is to kiss me.

I barely succeed on avoiding her holding my ground, and hit her with porehead poke α. There's no meaning to the α.

"Auu, love is painful."
"Yes yes, I love you Arisa."

Looking at the wagon, Lulu also shyly stretches her arms. She's probably inspired by Arisa.
For Lulu who rarely shows her spoiled side, I gently hold her to get down.
Of course I did not hug her tight.
However, I'd like you to stop staring at me so sheepishly. I feel like I would forget the age differences.

"By the way, what is this? Is she something you got from the rat-tan?"

Rat-tan... she means the red helmet right. That's quite a cute nickname.
<TLN: Rat-tan = Nezu-tan in romaji>

"The red helmet said that she's a princess."
"Oh, a princess you said! Even though you have beauties from various races waiting for you, now you even want to add the rat princess into your harem! This is why a man is so!"

You reeks of acting.

"M, master..."

Huh? By any chance, did Lulu take Arisa's words seriously?

"I, I'll also do my best to get your favor."
"Yes, yes, you're cute Lulu. But let's talk about favor after 5 years while refining yourself to be a woman."

Lulu's tension is strange, I wonder if this is an after effect of the battle. I unintentionally answer her like to Arisa.
Lulu puts both her hands on her cheeks, and she is twisting her body. It's cute, but what do I do now.

"We're~""Back~"
"We have come back, master."

The three came back at the right timing. There are 5 poison glands inside the container. The magic cores are plentiful inside the bag. And--

"Why are there a lot of stingers?"
"Yes, master had said that it's enough to collect 5 of them, but I wondered if it's possible to make disposable spears from them so I collected more."
"I see, let's make it next time."
"Yes! Thank you very much."

I likely will forget this, so I make a memo. If I forgot this kind of promise, it would gradually worsen our relationship.

Moreover, Pochi and Tama collected some parts of the red helmet and the rat cavalries equipments. There are no remains of the corpses, and the armor worn by the rat cavalries beside the helmet's were broken so they left it as it is. Also, I forgot about the recollection of bolts, but it seems that they have collected all the bolts besides the broken one.
Liza laments greatly at the fact that there is no meat left from the dash boars.

The "Princess" entrusted by the red helmet still hasn't awoken yet.

Since beasts might possibly gather at the ants' remains, we go ahead several kilometers with the wagon.

The camping ground is an open space with a small pond nearby. Lulu is really afraid with places without a pond. It may be some kind of trauma.

◇

After I've finished taking care of the horse, I'm reading books while drinking the teas brought by Lulu who came during the break of cooking.

I'm skim reading the travel journals I bought back then by unfolding them

in the menu. Since I don't want to look like I've gone senile, I open the introductory for life magic book wide turning it vainly.
It's probably better to read normal books, but it's more convenient to use the Menu because I could take memos and search for similar items.

I'm starting to smell a delicious aroma from dinner Liza and Lulu are cooking. They're making bean soup for today's dinner at my request.

"Oo~i""Preys~""We've caught it nodesu~"

The three girls who went hunting come back. I hope that they're not bringing fairies or something~
I slide the book sideway and look at the voices. With Arisa in the lead, Tama and Pochi are holding wild boars-- Of course, it's the four-footed ones-- high up.

It seems that they also hunt the ants which had fainted from the Shock Wave on the ants remains site.

"Master, please taste this."

Lulu brings a small bowl with soup inside.
Arisa said "Why only master, unfai~r", but she lost interest after being told that it's a bean soup and went to dismantle the boars with Liza.

I taste it. Yup, it tastes good thanks to the peppers I've bought from the high-class restaurant.

"It's delicious, I'll be enjoying the dinner."
"Yes! I'll work hard to help."

Lulu's expression has become quite natural.
I feel warm and fluffy now, but the the rat-men's "princess" who is beside me awaken.

5-6. The Rat Princess

Satou's here. Princesses are often present in fairy-tales. But don't you think that there are a lot of suffering princesses?
At least, I'd like it if they end up in happily ever after.

◇

"Have you come to?"

I asked gently while feeling relieved. However, the girl takes a leap to distance herself from me. No, she tried to but because of her anemia she got her feet tangled and tumbled over.

"...Where is Mize?"

I don't know that name, but I could only think one person.

"Is that the red helmet from the rat-man cavalries?"
"Yes."

Although she's right to be on guard, she sure is a taciturn girl.

"After entrusting you to us, he went to bravely fight the monsters... and died."
"It can't be..."

I hesitated for a bit whether to tell a lie to prevent her from getting shocked, but I decided to tell her the truth.
Her face went pale, she must be shocked.

"I am Satou. A traveling merchant. May I ask your name?"

I can see it with AR, but it's proper to introduce yourself to start a conversation.

"...Mia."

A short answer came out after a beat of silence.
Hu~m, it's difficult in quite different way than Lulu.

"Princess-sama, have awaken~"
"Ah, her name is Mia it seems."
"Eh~, I'm Arisa. Nice to meet you, Mia."

Arisa is dumbfounded after introducing herself and looked at Mia's face.

"What is the meaning of this, I wonder?"

Arisa is coming to me. Does she not use Status Check?

"What do you want to ask, say it."

Arisa takes a deep breath.

Inhales.

Exhales.

Inhales again.

"Why is it an elf!"

Arisa said so while pointing at the pale pointed ear of Mia.
Still, I don't think you need to be affected to this degree, right?

"It wasn't the rat-men's princess?"
"It's your fault that you did not properly check on it."

Certainly I thought that I was mistaken when I received her. Although, that's why I took the elf language in the first place. I conversed with Mia in elf language too, did Arisa not hear it?

"Kuh, even though I've made her a special cheese platter..."

I thought the saying that rats like cheese is just a folklore. Wasn't it the fault of western animations.

"Oh well. More importantly, let's eat!"

Arisa pull Mia's hand to make her forcibly stands up.

"If you're hungry, you'll just end up getting even more depressed, let's eat a lot and cry a lot! That's the best memorial service for the departed."

Those are some good words coming from Arisa. I have a feeling that she quoted it from somewhere, but I won't make fun of it.
Mia is overwhelmed by Arisa's vigor, and she take a seat for the meal.
I interpret for the two of them while walking together.

◇

I understand this after we've talked for a bit, even though Mia can't talk in Shiga language, she can understand the rough meaning of it.
Thanks to that I could finish the meal without having to become an interpreter for the little girls.

From the AR, I know Mia's stat, her age is 130 years old. A woman. Level 7. Her skills are, [Water Magic], [Bow], [Spirit Seer], those three. Her titles are, [Maze's Master], and [Little Child of Boluenan Forest]. Her true name is Misanalia Boluenan. I think that her nickname should be Lia, is it because of a custom of the elves?
Mazes huh. Are those different from labyrinths?

From her appearance, she looks to be midway between Arisa's and Lulu's age. Her breast is even more humble compared Arisa-- for Mia's sake I won't talk more than this.
Her hair is light turquoise almost blue rather than green. Her pupils are beautiful emerald greens. Her skin is white, and her body is thin to the point of almost looking unhealthy.
Still, I'm worried whether I'm cursed with a spell that makes me draw little girls.

Mia is eating only vegetables while avoiding meats since a while. The meats that she refused are shrewdly taken by Tama. From the opposite side, Pochi is swapping her vegetables to Mia's plate.

If you're picky with your foods, you won't grow big you know?

The one I'm most worried about, Liza, is intoxicatedly chewing on the wild boar's leg meat, she's not paying attention to her surrounding. I'll leave her alone.

Lulu is busy acting as a waitress. Since Arisa is taking care of her, even while Lulu is busy, she's still properly eating.

"Boar meat is delicious~"
"Meat stuck on bones is good nodesu."
"Mia too, do eat without refrain."
'Meat, I dislike.'
"She dislikes meat she said."
"Arara, how very elf-like."
'I am an elf.'
"Lulu, don't give her only vegetables, please cut some fruits too."
'I like pears.'
"She likes pears she said."

Mia's replies were shorts, but she did what she could to establish communication with the little girls.

◇

After finishing our meal, everyone is drinking teas made by Lulu.
Since Pochi and Tama don't seem like they have interest with tea, they're enjoying an after-meal nap on the sheet. Liza and Lulu are doing the clean-up.

I search for [Bornean Forest] in the travel journal book. It's located south from here, adjacent to the a Shiga kingdom duke's territory. It's a bit off

from the route to the Labyrinth city from here, but it's not like we could not go to it.

I'll be fine with escort her there, but it's probably a good idea to check the reason why those ants were chasing her. I don't think that it was just a chance encounter when it was that many.

I ask her in elf language. I'm careful as to not make it sounds like a cross-examination.

"Mia, I have a few things to ask you about, is it fine?"
"What?"

"Could I hear the reason why those large swarms of flying ant were chasing you?"
"...They came to capture."
"Capture Mia?"
"Yes."

Mia answer my questions bit by bit. I feel bad for everyone else, but I'll translate the informations I got from the conversation to them later.

"Why did the ants want to catch you?"
"Because it's necessary."

Well, yeah, of course.
If I don't plan my question better, I won't get the answer I want.

"Who is the one who need you?"
"....a magician."

It's a good news that it's not the same kind as wagahai-kun.
<TLN: 'Wagahai' is how the demon back then refer to itself, pretty funky way to do so in Japanese.>

"Do you know why you're needed?"
"For the maze."

Still, mazes huh, this is a world with a lot of mysterious words huh. Her title

is master of maze after all, I wonder if the maze can't function if she's not there.

"Where is the maze located?"
"...mountain."
"Is it near here?"
"Probably."

It's probably where that mist, or rather ants, came from.
Although, it's not like I intend to go there.

"What is that magician doing in the maze?"
"Making things like ants or puppets."

So the ant was made huh, they're like the subspecies of the ants from the labyrinth. By puppets, is it the moving dolls?
Nevertheless, even though I don't know for what reason the magician is gathering forces, it's probably not for something good. Judging from the position, it's to wage war with Seryuu city maybe?

"Do you know what they are made for?"
"...don't know."

Mia's face which had became red after taking the meal is turning pale. It looks like she knows but she doesn't want to tell or remember.

"Do you think that magician will come after you?"
"Surely coming."

That would be so huh.
That mean I can't just push her to the manager of the worker guild. If possible, I would have wanted to.

Even if war breaks out, I don't think that Seryuu city armed forces would lose, but the flying monsters might indiscriminately attack the girls I know somewhere in the city. It's painful to even think about it.
Should I become the silver masked hero, persuade or force the magician to give up on the maze, and push the magician to the soldiers on the gate of seryuu city? I feel like the plan is too simplistic.

Lastly, let's ask what the person herself want.

"Mia, Mize-san asked you me to take you to your home or to the same tribe. Which one do you wish?"
"...I want to go home."
"I understand."

"Everyone, we'll take a detour to bring Mia home, is that fine?"

I asked everyone beside the two who were sleeping. Since no one disagree, it's decided.

5-7. Mistake and Clean-up

Satou's here. They said that carelessness is one's greatest enemy, but precisely because ones doesn't realize their carelessness that I feel that they would fail.
Things you get accustomed with are the most dangerous, it's the same for any world.

◇

Now then, shall I pay a visit to our magician comes midnight?
I'd hate to get attacked by the army of ants when the morning dawn ...ants are not nocturnal right?

I go inside the wagon alone, and begin to change my clothes. Since Arisa is peeking, I roll up my smelly sweaty shirt into a ball and throw it on her face. Suffer well in that stink.

I'm still wearing a mantle on the outside, but I change into thick trousers and shirt inside, and also knee-high leather boots. Since I will be trekking the mountain, it'd be inconvenient to wear a robe.

"Sniff, sniff, snifff."
"Arisa, stop it, that's vulgar."

This is the first time I saw Lulu scolding Arisa. Still, what the heck is this girl doing? No, I understand when I see it, but I refuse to acknowledge it....
Aren't you too much of a pervert to sniff on a smelly shirt?
I take the shirt away from Arisa and give it to Lulu.

"I'm sorry, but please wash this when you're doing laundry."
"Yes, master."
"Before that, let me enjoy the teens' scent""Auu."
I poked her forehead before she finished.

"Love is too painful~ please do the punishing in more sensual way!"
"There are a lot of other girls who cry for being defiled, treat yourself better."
"Uuu~ I'm a maiden too."

A maiden wouldn't do such things--- At least publicly.

"At any rate, what are you going to do by changing clothes?"
"I'll do some reconnaissance."

I'm actually going to the magician's place, but I won't say it.

"I will accompany master."

And so Liza proposed, but I persuaded her to defend the camp. She insisted that I take Pochi and Tama as bodyguards, but when I said that I'd go back before the sun set, she let me go.

◇

Truthfully, I won't be going straight to the magician's place right away. I want to enlarge the search area before the next pursuing armies come, so I'm going to retrace the course until the area where the rat cavalries was devastated. I should be able to reach it before the sun set if I run.

After I reach a place invisible from the camp, I run at the level where the ground gouged. In just five minutes, I've reached the place where Arisa massacred the ants with her unique skill.
The ants which pile up on one after another are obstructing the road. I lightly jump over it.
A lot of small animals are gathering, perhaps the monsters' corpses are delicious.

Even so, with this many monsters' corpses, it will interfere with the traffic. If this was a game then it would disappear in time but reality is troublesome.

...Hmm?

...Dang.

"'Reality is troublesome', not that!"

I stop my feet, and look back at the mountain of monsters' corpses.

I'm imagining for a bit.
In a highway with scarce traffics, monsters corpses piled up. Corpses which died with no external injury and with only one arrow stuck. Normal person would be interested to know more. And then, the only wagon that has passed this route was ours.
If it's not someone really dumb, they would probably connect the corpses with us.

This is bad.

I change my plan, and indiscriminately stow away the monster corpses in the ants folder inside the Storage. I had thought of dismantling and throw them on the roadsides but I decided to use storage since it'd be too time-consuming.
Since the corpses are not displayed on the radar, I rely on my sight. It was easy to remove the corpses on the open road, but the ones stuck on the thickets a bit away were hard works.
Nevertheless, thanks to me repeating the corpses retrieval with all my effort, the road is cleared from them as far as eyes can see before the sun set.

I'm hiding bloods and traces of battles with suitably long tree branches. They would probably attract attention but it's better than puddle of bloods in plain sight.
Since I see from the radar that Pochi and Tama are departing from the camp to look for me, I finish hiding the bloods with trees from the Storage and return.

This took more time than I thought, so I couldn't do my original goal.
◇

With Pochi and Tama hanging on my arms on the sides, I walk down the highway in sunset.
I'm hearing chewing sounds of small animals from the bushes on the roadsides. There are probably some pieces from the corpses, I feel sorry for taking away foods for the small animals. And it was unexpectedly hard to keep Pochi and Tama from pushing through to the bushes.

In a place 10 minutes walking distance away from the camp, I catch a monster on the radar.

Let's check the detail.

Gargoyle, level 5. Plainly speaking, it's a flying stone statue. Noteworthy points are complete immunity to mind attack and night vision. Also, it's hard, since it's a stone statue.
It could be an independent monster or a familiar of the magician. It's probably the latter this time.

Its moving speed is slightly faster than a person.
The gargoyle destination is probably the place where Arisa massacred the large groups of ants right?

"Master~?""What's wrong desu?"

Pochi and Tama pull my hands. I've stopped swinging them on my arms.

"Tama, do you have the throwing stones?"
"Aye."

Then, I should drop it with a stone.

"I forgot something, let's go back."
"Yes nano desu~.""Aye~."

I spin the two like spinning tops while on my arms. Since they demand to do it again, I do it thrice after that.
More, they said but since it'd be troublesome if we can't secure best location to attack the gargoyle, I promise them to do it again once we get

back to the camp site.

◇

The three of us are hiding beside a shelter. Although I said shelter, it's just a rock as high as a grown man.

The gargoyle is flying overhead us.
After a moment pause, I throw two fist-sized stones with both hands. I throw one more a beat later. All three stones hit the target and the gargoyle becomes a mere broken statue.

"Co reco co re.""Core nano desu~."

Is that a core retrieval song? While listening to the mysterious song, I watch over Tama who's singing with strange intonation and Pochi who's interluding her while both of them retrieving the core.
Just like the ants, low level monsters have small magic core with pale color. The price is most likely cheap too.

"Aye.", so she says while presenting the core. I put it in my pocket straight into the storage. And then we head back to the camp site.

Needless to say, the two didn't ask what was the [Something] that I forgot.

◇

Since I don't want to needlessly make Lulu and Mia worry, I only tell the gargoyle thing to Arisa and Liza.

And since the probability that the camp would get attacked when I go toward the magician is high, I decided not to do a late-night visit.
Although, even if I don't go there, I feel like the opponent will come here instead.

The night watch tonight will be in 3 shifts. The first are Liza and Arisa, the second are Pochi and Tama and the last are me, Mia and Lulu. They're alloted according to the potential of enemy search and fighting equally. I'd be glad to have Lulu together with Arisa, but since I wouldn't know what to do with just me and the taciturn girl, I made her join us.

Pochi and Tama take position on the left and right of me who's lying on the sheet. We've been sleeping together since the time in Labyrinth. Although I didn't sleep at all since I was on guard at that time.

"Together~.""Nano desu~."
"Good night, Pochi, Tama."
"Aye~.""Nighty~."

I could hear Arisa grumbling from a distance, but since it's nothing much, I let it off. Lulu and Mia were at loss finding the place to sleep, but by Arisa's suggestion, they will be sleeping beside us. It's a bit crowded but since it's warm, it's nice.

I frantically try to retain my consciousness which was almost taken away by the comfortable warmth. There'll be 3 shifts of night watch, but since it's almost certain that there will be a night attack, I'll be careful not to sleep. While watching the radar, I'm reading the book from the menu to prevent drowsiness. This is going to be a long night.

5-8. Shadow Stalker

Satou's here. It's nice to have handy tools, but relying too much on it made you unable to notice the oddness with your own eyes, thus unthinkable mistake happens.
This happens in daily life, work and even in another world.

◇

Just before Liza and Arisa's night watch duty is over, I see enemies on the map.
There are three monsters called Shadow Stalkers. Since I've never heard of it, I check their details. Level 12, it has [Physical Damage Halved], [Stamina Drain] as race specific skills, if I don't have any means to counter it they might become formidable enemies. It doesn't like they're undeads. Their speeds aren't that fast, but they would probably get here in 1 hour. The enemies probably have ran out of flying type monsters.

I'm arranging various things related to battle to be displayed from the menu.
And then I turn my view to my chest. I had thought that something has been pressuring my chest for a while but as it turn out, it's Pochi and Tama who climbed on my chest and stomach while letting out ,"Gude~", sounds, sleeping there lying on their bellies.
I place them on the sheet while being careful not to wake them, and get up.

"Ara? Master, are you doing yobai?"
<TLN: http://everything2.com/title/yobai>
"Are you having trouble sleeping? Master?"

Arisa, whose somehow being held on Liza's arms called me out. Liza is probably already sleepy, her voice is weak without power. I should let her sleep a little before the enemies get here.

"I'll change with you, so it's fine for you two to sleep."
"Is it okay? Isn't the next turn going to be Pochi and Tama?"
"I'll make the two do the watch duty together with Lulu in early morning."

Arisa ,whose free from Liza's hold is coming while saying, "Let me sleep on your laps~.", but I lift and roll her to beside Lulu. Arisa is probably tired too, without complaining she goes to sleep while using Lulu as a body pillow. Lulu's painful expression from being clung by Arisa is cute too. I'm almost taken over with wicked thought but I manage to forcibly shake it off.

I continue watching the map while adding twigs to the bonfire. It's still 50 minutes before the monsters arrive. Since back then, the monsters doesn't increase in number.

"...I'm thirsty."

Mia who has woken up hands me a water bottle. After I receive it she sits beside me while I'm drinking the water.

"Why?"

A small voice comes out of Mia. It doesn't seem to be a monologue.

"Why am I protecting you from the magician?"
"Yes."
"As you can see, there's nothing deep to it."

Likely not satisfied with my answer, she falls silent.

"It's dangerous."
"Looks like it, a lot of monsters did come out back in the afternoon."
"Mize and even the others... died."

Come to think of it, what's the relation between elves and the rat-men?

"The red-helmet(Mize)-san, do you know him from somewhere?"
"Forest."
"Bornean Forest?"
"Yes."

Connecting the story from the few words of Mia, it seems that the red-helmet was saved by Mia's parent when he was dying and surrounded by goblins outside the forest 10 years ago. The red-helmet then stayed in Mia's parent house for a while while being taught together with Mia various things by Mia's parent, so they became acquainted.
It seems that the red helmet he was wearing was a mithril product given by Mia's parent. So it exists, mithril huh.
The reason the red-helmet called Mia princess, was probably because of this.

"Did you get attacked by the magician when you're visiting Mize-san's hometown together with him?"
"No."

After asking her in several angles, I understood the rough situation. Seems that Mia was abducted from her hometown on the forest by the magician, and held captive in a maze in a mountain. The magician then forcibly made her to be the "Master of Mazes" with a forced contract ceremony. Even if she's called master, she was nothing more than the proxy of the magician, she was forced to sit in the master room for half a day.
According to Mia, the maze's movement is weak, so she's probably some sort of a key or a catalyst.

"Did Mize-san come to help you on the maze?"
"A coincidence."

Mia denies while shaking her head. When I inquire for more details, it seems that she executed an emergency escape command on the Maze Core when there was a chance at the time the magician went back to his room. When I said "You know well", she said, "It's in elf language." Perhaps, she pushed something like a button written in elf language.
And then she escaped to the Rat-men village and reunited with the red-helmet there.

"The village was burnt because of my fault."

Mia painfully said so. I hold her shoulder and say, "It's not your fault." to console her. In times like this anyone would want to be comforted even if it's just merely words of consolation.

The subordinates of the magician who came to look for Mia seemed to have burned down the village as a lesson. Those subordinates got disposed by the red helmet and his friends in a counterattack, but there were some villagers who fell victims. Hence, it was hard for her to stay in the village, so the red helmet with his subordinates were going to escort Mia to meet the elf in Seryuu city.
And then, when they were going down the mountain--

"We were attacked."
"By the flying ants right?"
"Yes."

From then on, it's probably the same as we have seen.

◇

Meanwhile, the shadow stalkers are stopping at the site where the flying ants were decimated by Arisa's uniques skills in the afternoon.

I should wake everyone soon.
I call Pochi while sending magic power to the Light Hot Plate.

"Pochi."

Pochi who's sleeping with Tama curling up like a ball is reacting with her ears twitching. Pochi is getting up while rubbing her eyes and looking so sleepy.

"Unyu~, food?"
"Not that, wake everyone up since I feel some presences from the forest."

Among these members, Pochi is the easiest to wake up. The one with the worst waking habit is Liza.

"It's not morning but wake up nodesu~."

She steps on Tama's stomach and knocks on Arisa's head with a whack.

Lulu gets up hearing Pochi's voice.

"Liza wake up too nodesu."

Liza's body is swaying from the shaking but she's only groaning without waking up. Tama get on top of Liza's stomach to assist Pochi. However, while half-asleep, Liza catches the two and hugs them.

"Mugyu~.""Wake up~?"

Looks like the two will be like that until Liza wakes up.
Arisa is coming to the bonfire while yawning with her mouth wide open. Lulu puts her hand in front of her mouth and begins yawning cutely. Where is this difference in girl power coming from?

"Fuwaah~ is it enemies?"
"They're still far, but there are three coming."
"Judging from the atmosphere, they're not powerful."

I teach her about the enemies' types and characteristics.

"They're not undead right? Then they're easy preys with mind magic."

When she gets to the bonfire and sees Mia who is sitting besides me, Arisa does an exaggerated gesture by opening her eyes wide while saying, "What a fearful girl!". Who is she imitating?

"Hey wait, you have me if you want to do it with someone!"
"Stop saying those stupid things. I was just hearing her rough situations."
"Then why is she clinging to your arm?"

Come to think of it, Mia is clinging to my right arm before I knew it. I thought we were separated after I activated the light hot plate earlier. Since I'm used to be hugged by Pochi and Tama, I didn't mind it.
Mia parts her hands after being pointed out by Arisa.

'"I didn't hug him."'
"She didn't hug me she says."
"That's a lie! I saw you separating just now."

'"It must be a mistake."'
"If you're an adult, don't fuss too much over it."
"Gunununu~."

I receive a cup of tea from Lulu who's handing it. Am I thinking too much for seeing Mia who casually sits beside me after getting the tea?

"Liza, here nano desu."
"Nya, my tail hurts~."

Following the two, Liza has woken up.
I wonder if Pochi and Tama dislike tea, they're drinking plain boiled waters that Lulu had put. By the way, Tama can drink hot water just fine. She drank soup just fine too.

"Liza, it's about time to wake up."

I said so to her, and her loosened face began to rapidly tighten. After confirming me visually, to keep up her appearance, she greets me with composed face.

"G, good morning, master."
"Good morning."

It's not morning though.
I should make them get ready soon.

"Enemies are closing in. Wash your face and keep awake."

Everyone begin the preparation, only Tama who keeps staring at the top of a tree. There aren't enemies there according to the radar.

"Is there something over there?"
"Those birds, weird~?"

Birds?
There are around 20 owls nesting there. It's certainly a bit scary.

◇

It seems that the shadow stalkers have noticed the bonfire, they're enclosing in to this camping ground. They're at the other side of the owls' tree.

The three beastkin girls are in charge of the middle. Arisa will deal with the enemis on the right. Me and Mia are left to deal with the enemies on the left. Lulu is taking refuge in the wagon for safety.

I'm hearing fluttering sounds from behind.
Is it the owl earlier?

I look back for a bit to confirm it.
It is really an owl from earlier. It has a single red head-feather as its characteristic. Since the place where the owl landed is the place where we buried the boar remain for dinner earlier, it's probably attracted to the smell.
I'm convinced with that and look back to the front.

Right at that time, a red dot indicating an enemy suddenly appears on the radar--- Furthermore, it's at point blank range.

5-9. Shadow and Magician

Satou's here. The one who's weak to horror movie, Satou.

I'm fine with ghost or apparition, but I'm scared with faces of the characters who got into spasms in terror.

◇

The enemy who suddenly springs up comes from the direction of the owl just before.
Appearing from the stretched shadow behind the owl, it's a figure of a person wearing black robe. I can't see its face because its wearing a hood and long sleeves.

"I've come to pick you, Mia."

Mia who's beside me is trembling.

"...No."

This man with the bent back is, without a doubt, the magician. The owl from earlier is nesting on the man's shoulder. Is it a pet or a familiar?

I put myself to protect Mia behind me, and check on his status. His name is Zen, level is high at 41. Skill is--- [Unknown].

This unpleasant feeling, is he the same kind as Arisa and the heroes?
While agitated I continue to read his status--- What is this?! Skill [Unknown] also appears there.

Mia is trembling behind me.
I can roughly understand the details. This guy is too dangerous for anyone

but me. Let's deal with him carefully. It seems impossible, but I'd like to settle this with discussion if possible.

"Nice to meet you, magician-dono. I'm Satou, a merchant."
"I don't have business with someone like a merchant."

The magician doesn't seem like he'd even bother to introduce himself.
I wonder if it's because he looks down on merchants or he just has low communication skill.

"Even if you don't, I have a duty to protect this girl. I won't pass her to a suspicious man."
"Fumu, you seem to be protected by generous and skillful mercenaries, but if they stand before me it will become a bloodbath, do you understand?"

The magician points his cane here while keeping his back bent.

"It's no good! Master, this guy is too strong."

Arisa warned me from behind.

"I am the great King of Night. It's good that you know your place, but trashes don't have any place to call me 'this guy'."

This is bad, the magician's attention is directed toward Arisa.

"■■■■　■——"

The magician begins to chant magic toward Arisa.

I don't want to leave Mia, but I can't afford not to now. I rush toward the magician, and strike his stomach with my fist.
But the strike is unable to stop the magician's chant. My fist has penetrated the magician's robe, but there is no response at all. Is it this guy's unique skill?

"---Shadow Whip."

When the magician finishes his chant, shadow stretches from his foot to

form something that look like a spear that plunge toward Arisa. Is that the shadow whip?
I'm back stepping away from the magician, and I cut myself between the shadow whip and Arisa.

I block the shadow whip with my whole body. The shadow whip coils around my body, at that time I feel some small pricks.

>[Shadow Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Shadow Resistance Skill Acquired]

What do you mean with shadow resistance.
Ah, it's been a while since my scientific blood denies the fantasy.

But I'm profiting from this trouble.
I feel like the resistance skill will be of small importance in this situation, but let's increase the chance to protect Mia even if only a little.
I allocate points to shadow resistance and activate it.

◇

"Fumu, that's an unbelievable body. Are you really a merchant?"
"A friend of mine calls me nimble merchant."

From behind our conversation, I can hear Arisa whimper.

"It's useless, it really didn't work."

Did Arisa counterattack when the magician started to chant? Her magic power decreased for a bit. There is absolutely no change to the magician, he probably has resistance.

"To put yourself in front of a woman to protect them from my attack, you have my praise."
"If you admire me then won't you back down?"
"That's a different story. Mia is needed to achieve my goal."

I'm finally able to free myself from the shadow whip. This shadow whip only gives me insignificant prickly damages but it had no substance and no reaction so I couldn't tear it off. Yet it could be used to restrain thing, some fantasy substance it is.

"What is your goal?"
"There is no meaning to tell you that. If you want to save Mia, then bring a hero along."
"Do you have some grudges on heroes?"

The magician doesn't answer and laughs loudly while looking up the sky. Accompanying his laughter, countless shadow whips appear from his feet. Does the spell earlier retain its effect?

It's going to abduct Mia who stands listlessly. If physical attack isn't working then how about magic attack.
I take out magic guns from the pocket, equip them on both hands, and set the power scale to the MAX.
For someone of this guy's level, this much probably won't kill him.

"Way off the mark."

Following the magician's word, the magic whips expand toward me and Mia.
I intercept the shadow whips with the magic guns. Dual wielding guns feels like a chuunibyou from somewhere, I don't like it.

It's working.
I succeeded in destroying every magic whips that had went toward Mia, while I let the one that came toward me to coil itself on me. I wasn't able to destroy them all as expected.

"Those are quite good weapons."
"Is that so? If you leave Mia alone then I will give you one, how about it?"

While offering the trade to the magician, I smash the shadow whip coiling my body with the magic guns.
I hear Mia's short scream from behind.

I turn just my head, Mia is being restricted by shadow appearing from her feet.
More shadow whips appear from the magician and restrict me.
The magician begins to chant a new magic.

I can't let him casts more magic than this, I fire the magic guns to the magician. His health decreases but immediately recovers before the next shot. Is this guy's unique skill invincibility?
I change my aim to the cane, and fire the magic bullet.

"Help me nodesu!" "Help~?"

Pochi and Tama seemed to try to do something to the shadow whips but they slipped through it. Even just slipping through the shadow whip seems to give them damage, the two jump back while screaming.
Liza and Arisa are looking here from a cover while waiting for their chance and eluding the magic whips.

All the magic bullets that I fire are blocked by the shadow whips that appear from the magician's feet.
Then, finally the magician's magic, [Shadow Portal], is activated.

Mia's body is sinking into the shadow.
I give up on shooting the magician, and hold Mia's upper body from sinking with brute force.

"I'll have you return this girl. Since it'd trouble me if you're careless, I'll say this, if you try to forcibly pull her, Mia's life will be no more."

The magician is sinking into shadow too. I still can't see his face.

"You are no match for a transcendent being like me, resign from your unreasonable struggle. If you wish for death then you're free to visit my maze, I expect a show of courage and wisdom to break through it."

The magician disappears into the shadow while laughing loudly. He didn't see through Mia's sinking until the end, is it because he has allowance to do so or because of carelessness.

My body is almost dragged into the shadow too, but maybe because of my resistance, it stops at 1 cm deep.
The pulling power of the shadow for Mia is strong. My pulling power is even stronger, but Mia's health gradually decreases. If I put more power than this, Mia's body would break.

I have decided.

"Arisa! When morning comes, go ask for assistance at the worker's guild manager."

After telling her that, I let myself sink into the shadow with Mia.

Arisa and the girls should be able to deal with the shadow stalkers somehow. If possible without injuries I hope.
That manager is unreliable but this time it's a crisis of a person from his tribe, Nadi-san should be able to arrange for it.

◇

After I'm sunk, there is only jet black space around.
There is no sound or light, it truly feels like inside shadow. Of course there is no air too.
It is indeed a bit painful. My health decrease faster than from the coiling shadow whip. Still, probably thanks to self-healing, it comes back up at fixed interval. Perhaps, I've become unable to die by suffocation.

Even with air, a person would go mad if they spend too long in this place.

Thanks to the lack of oxygen, I can't concentrate well.

Yes, how about Mia.
Since I can't even look at my own body, it goes without saying that I can't see her either.

I take out Light Drop from Storage and pour it magic power.
I thought that I could see my body then but it didn't work. The radar shows

only me too.
I use [All Map Exploration] after a long time of not using it. But unfortunately, radar display remains as it is. It might really be only me around.

I open the map and see it.
There, something is written-- [It's an area with no map].

"What's this a game!"

I retorted.

And then, as if the voice is echoing back to back, the shadow space with no sound is breaking, like a glass, vanishing into fragments.
<TLN: We Majin Buu now lol>

◇

I'm in a place like the one nobles use to have audiences with people. It's a vertical room, like a school gymnasium cut in half. The floors are made of stones, fat circular stone pillars are lined up along the wall, and candlesticks attached to the wall are emitting LED-like magical lights. There's a throne in the furthermost of the interior, and in that interior a sphere 2 meter big in diameter is blinking rainbow lights while floating at knee-high height.

Mia who is made to sleep is sitting on the throne. Beside her, an unknown beautiful blond woman is nursing her. Her face looks exactly like Mia, but her breasts are outrageously big. No, such thing doesn't matter now.

The magician who is running his fingers through something that looks like a music stand beside the throne notices me, before I could rush to him.

"Absurd!"

Even while surprised, the guy is not loosening his fingers from playing the music stand.

"Yes, absurd! How did you escape from my prison of shadow! It's something that shouldn't be broken by a group of low level people like you bastards."

Are you surprised, boasting or looking down, be clear about it.
My feet are a bit unstable, I wonder if it's the effect from the shadow space earlier.

"I have a light amulet with me. Shadow magic isn't going to work."

Oops, I wasn't going to tell him the true reason but even for deceiving him the detail was too appropriate. Is it thanks to deception skill?

"I see, I cannot permit unfairness. This room is only allowed for people who have captured the maze, those who earn it can come here, that's the rule."

The magician stops there, and nods to his own words.

"And then, the hero who is able to get here, is the one who is qualified to annihilate me, the King of Immortal."

What is this guy saying?
Capture the maze, does he want to kill himself?
Furthermore, didn't he say that he's a King of Night initially? He can't decide the name for himself.

But, rather than that, I feel slightly mad at this guy's excuse. He got our girls and Mia in trouble for such reason?

"If you want to die then go do it yourself. Don't involve other people."
"Fuhahaha, I have received blessing from the god, I am immortal."

It's unpleasant, but if I continue this stupid talk, my feet will recover soon.
But, the other guy doesn't seem like he intend to continue.

"Well then, I'll have you leave from the master room."

The door located beside the throne is opening and then—

5-10. Maze of Trazayuya

Satou's here. When I was in grade school, I love the free time to play during the school athletic festival.
When I became an adult, I occasionally went to fitness clubs to move my body, but in this world, I wonder if there are facilities that provide you place to safely forge your body?

◇

Right now I am falling.

I had prepared myself for the enemies when the door beside the throne was opening, but instead, the one who came out was a beautiful woman who looked exactly like the woman who was caring for Mia.

Right when I was distracted with that, they activated the true mechanism to reject me out of the master room.
The entire floor disappeared. To make the entire room into a pitfall, even a death trap has its limit. No, the trap discovery skill didn't activate so it might have been an impromptu trap.

I don't think that I'd die even at the current falling speed but I'd hate it if I'm sunk deeply into the ground without any mean to get out.
Maybe I should stick some things on the wall to decrease this speed, like often seen in manga.
I take out a sledgehammer from the Storage and kick it strongly, the reaction force makes me collide with the wall on the opposite side. The wall is soft and smooth, there is no place for gripping.

I take out a great black iron sword from the storage and stab it into the wall. With a screeching sounds, my falling speed gradually decreases. My wrist hurts a little.
After I reached a certain speed, the great sword, seemingly hit its limit, breaks.

I fell into a water body on the bottom of the hole before I could take out another great sword.

I experienced only little shock since I arranged my feet to make my fall straight
I sunk considerably deep but since the velocity was quite reduced, I didn't hit the bottom.

While swimming up to get to the water surface, I execute [All Map Exploration] magic.

The map displays [Maze of Trazayuya].
The maze consists of 20 levels with each having 500 meters diameter. It's pretty small compared to the labyrinth in the labyrinth city. According to the book that I've read, there are at least 200 floors that has been explored there, with more to come. Furthermore, each floor is several kilometers wide, so this one is quite obviously smaller.
Moreover, most passages are systemically perpendicular. It's exactly a maze. While the demon's labyrinth felt kind of biological, this maze feels systematic or rather, artificially made.

I finally get my face out of the water.
The place that I've fallen into is blocked off by stone walls. I could see a few mosses growing on the stone walls. According to the map, the 20th level is 300 meter above.
Looks like this level is modeled like the outside.

From what I see on the map, there is no enemy here.
The exit is two kilometers to the west. A bit further to the east, there's a hidden door called [Room of Trazayuya]. Judging from the name, it's probably the room where the secret of this maze is sleeping, though since I already know the route, it's probably unneeded.

....No, I cannot deceive myself.

I really want to save Mia as soon as possible but I'm curious with that Trazayuya room too. It might be just a simple intuition, but I feel like I must go there.

I apologize to Mia in my heart and begin dashing to the hidden door.

It's hard to swim because of my clothes. Particularly my boots, it's hard to kick the water because of it.
Since no one sees me, I put my clothes inside the storage. I discovered that I could directly put what I wear into the storage.

◇

The hidden door is protected by the same kind of riddle from the labyrinth of demon on Seryuu city but thanks to DeRiddle skill, I easily get through it.

The hidden door is letting out moldy smells. The walls and the floors aren't made of stones but resin-like materials.
This looks like someone's research room. It's fully equipped with dining room, bathroom and bedroom. From the accumulated dust, the magician (Zen) have probably never come to this room.
I'm fascinated with the tub on the bathroom, but this isn't a situation where I could casually take a bath.

There are many books and memo in this research lab. I don't know how many yeas has passed for the books, but most books beside the magic books have deteriorated really badly so I put them inside the menu to read from there.

I already have a guess it from the maze's name, but it's said that the creator of this maze is called Trazayuya. He is an elf. Moreover, it seems that he's from the same hometown as Mia.
All the books are written in elf language. If I didn't get the language from the red helmet, I wouldn't be able to read them at all.

There are some places where the inks are blurred, but I could roughly read it. It seems that this maze was made by Trayazuya-shi and the elves for the sake of "Safety", mimicking the labyrinth's function.
The memo tells about the guy's anguish, or rather, his over-protectiveness for his tribe.

'We, the elves, have weak attachment to life. When faced with desperate situation, we don't struggle much compared to other tribes. Because of this, a lot of our younger generations died in the labyrinth. This maze is made as an absolute necessity for when the elves need to flee from dangers to safety.'

Others details are like, how the maze has something called Maze Core not unlike Labyrinth Core, although it cannot grow up like a labyrinth, but it sucks up magic power from its surrounding and refines it into magic cores just like a labyrinth.

And then I found some disturbing words.

'The facilities to make artificial monsters by inserting magic cores into existing creatures on cultivation tanks have been completed.'

Are monsters originally normal creatures?
Certainly the monsters that I've fought up until now are all looking like deformed normal creatures. Since Wagahai-kun was a demon, that particular one is probably entirely different.
After thinking about that, I feel a bit reluctance in drinking potions which are made from magic cores.

Let's get back on track. I'll think about that later.

Trazayuya-shi has made three prototyping facilities. A facility to cultivate monsters. A facility that produce golems. And a facility to create dolls that would serve people.
However, since he earned the cooperation from the rat-men community nearby, he abandoned the last one.

Suddenly, I'm interested with what the monsters who live here are eating. I wonder if they cannibalize each other or if there are feeder monsters being produced?

Even after the maze was completed, the other elves didn't come here.
There is one thing at the end of his note.

'No one would forget my failure in just 100 years. My life will soon end. This maze will be sealed until my countrymen need it in the future. I believe that the day where the elves lead the world once again will come--- Trazayuya Bornean.'
<TLN: I'm normalizing the elf forest's name to Bornean, since it probably comes from 'Borneo'.>

I see, so this is why Mia is needed. Still, the magician is good to have known how to solve the seal without reading this note.

I have obtained various informations but I have not gained the way to save Mia.
I'm a bit worried with a scribbling that read, "Explosions are romance!", but there probably aren't any idiots who would make self-destruction mechanism in a facility that was made for safety.

Since there doesn't seem to be any way to get back to the main level from this one, I decided to get out of the maze from one end and search for the main entrance.

I continue through the road from the underground lake that I had fallen into to the exit. I can't run since it's narrow with stalactites poking out here and there. Flowing water from the underground lakes are dripping from the stalactites.

While minding as not to step aquatic creatures that look like salamanders, I continue walking to the exit.

◇

The exit is on a vertical cliff 5 meters above the ground.
I try confirming my location on the map but since I'm in an unexplored area, I perform [All Map Exploration] magic.
This here is [Ash Rats Principality]. It's five mountains away from the highway that we had traveled. It seems there is a rat-men community about one mountain away from here. Even though it's called principality, the village only has around 1000 people.

The entrance of the maze is located near the summit of this mountain.

Since it's a bit dark, I take out the Light Drop to light the surrounding.
I can't find decent footholds.

It can't be helped, I jump down 5 meters to the ground.

I feel something not right when I look around.
I had thought that it was because right now is early winter, but it's too strange that there aren't even any sounds of insects. Most trees have their leaves fallen, and even among the fallen leaves, most of them are withered.
I have always call them another world tree, but the AR displays that they are called Shiiya trees. Even evergreen trees can have their leaves fall.

I'm bothered with them, but right now my top priority is to get to the maze's entrance.

◇

I run up the mountain. Since the underbrushes have withered, there aren't many obstacles.

Along the way, from the radar, I caught sight of a big tree on the mountainside.
It's not in red, but it's a level 20 fairy tribe. I wonder if it's a trent?

If I continue to run on this course, I would get near it, but since I could just escape even if it turn out to be hostile, I continue on.

When I run on the side of that tree, the log displays [Resisted charm effect].

On the base of the tree... There's a big-breasted older sister in nurse outfit.

No well, I do like nurse outift.
But think about the TPO even if you're an illusion.

"Excuse me, o young gentleman over there."

Moreover, her speech style is from the historical drama.
The AR indicates that it's a Dryad. Level 21. It's a tribe with charm and illusion skills.

"Do you have to be so hasty in the middle of the night? If you don't mind, how about a cup of sake?"

The girl points to a red table and chairs that appeared out of nowhere, filled with sake and foods on top.
Rather than dryad, I feel like being fooled by a fox.

The dryad approached me and took my arm when I was distracted with the table. I feel something soft on my arm.
I'm almost tempted to enjoy the poyonpoyon while drinking, but I mustn't forget about Mia.

"I'm sorry but I don't have any time to accompany you, if you have a business then can you please say it quick?"

After I said so, the illusion disappears, and a girl with green long hair that touch her feet appears, in bare skin. She looks to be around 12-13 years old I guess? So the feeling earlier was an illusion too, her actual figure is quite modest. Since I can't be turned on with that, I'd like you to cover yourself. Be more modest please.
Her expression has changed from the bewitching one earlier to stern. It's the face of a child whose not used to being angry so there is no force to it.

"Become mine, human!"
"I'm sorry, but how about proposing again in 7-8 years?"
"No, become my meal!"

The girl says that all kind of trees here has died for several months making the animals disappear. Furthermore, the earth veins on the mountain were cut off recently so she is dying.
It's most likely the fault of the [Maze of Trazayuya].

"This is because you humans sucked the mountain's nourishment."
"I could give you a bit of my health and magic, but I cannot allow you to eat me."

Seems that I went easy because the opponent looks like a child.

"If you give me your magic then I'll eat it."
"That's good."

I let her sucks my MP. I had thought that it would be like vampire sucking from the neck but turned out that it's directly from the mouth. Frankly speaking, it's a kiss.
Kissing a young naked girl, I can't let my acquaintances see this.

NSFW?

The girl was satisfied after sucking 300 MP.
After that, I arrived at the maze's entrance without any particular problem.

5-11. Maze of Trazayuya (2)

Satou's here. When I was a child, I was good at solving the maze quiz that appeared on the corner of newspapers.
When I became an adult, the only experience involving maze that I had was from the one on theme parks.

◇

The maze's entrance is a tower of about one and half meters high. The tower is hidden by the vegetations, so ones wouldn't find it if they didn't know about it in the first place.
There are some traces of people going in and out, but even those are few.
According to the map, there's a back door used for monsters to go in and out.

I open the door and go inside the tower. It's carelessly not locked.
I was contemplating to wear the silver mask before I went in, but since the magician is the same kind as Arisa, he probably had seen my name. Since it's better that silver mask = Satou is not known, let's not transform into the silver mask this time.

I look up the enemies information inside the maze to prepare the necessary weapons. The majority of them are flying ants at level 5-8, and skeletons are at level 1-3. The slightly stronger ones are the level 18 bone golems and the level 15 wood golems.
The other curious ones are like slime-based enemies and homonculus, but they're small fries at level 5.
It's just that, I'm a bit interested with the [Nature Art] that the homonculus have. What kind of skill is that? Is it the same kind as Nature Magic?
If the situations allow, I'd like Liza and the girls to learn it.

The high level ones are the iron golem located in a large room in the center of the maz, and the magician in the master room.

My equipment will be a saber rather than a shield, and a submachine-gun-like magic gun. I'm not using the usual magic gun since this one seems to be stronger.

Actually, this is a high performance gun that could fire 50 bullets per second when charged with magic power once, but since it needs 10 minutes cool down once it fire all the bullets at once, I haven't used it until now.
For this occasion, I choose to use [Scatter] shoot mode since I don't have to worry with friendly fires. Even though the power is lower than usual, it's enough for fighting the small fries.

I put on the overcoat that I took off when I feel into the lake. It's different from what I wear just now, it's thick but cheap thing I've bought on the east district of Seryuu city. This is good enough for the blood of my victims.

I go down the spiral stairs while straightening my equipment.

◇

I've entered the maze after I got out of the stairs.
The ground is different from the resin-like thing on the underground, but although it looks like stone pavement, it somehow feels like plants. The visibility is good since lights are leaking through the crevices on the floorboards.
This is good since I don't have torches like when I was in the labyrinth.

I could hear some light metal clang-clang sounds from somewhere, although I don't know what kind of thing could produces that sounds. Since I still don't understand even after listening to it carefully, I decided to put it in the corner of my mind.

Since I have no intention of fighting steadily, I look up for the shortest route to the master room.

I kick and destroy the skeletons that I meet, and throw bones on any flying ants who come up, eliminating them.
Even though I've prepared a nice gun, it didn't get any turn at all.

Still, this skeleton's skull is not that of human. It's probably from rat-man tribes.

This maze isn't like the one typically in a game where you go to lower level every time you clear a level. Rather, the blocks are connected in three-dimensional formations and you might go up and down in complex structures.

Even on this stair I'm descending right now the wall-like object isn't touchable making it feels like a trompe l'oeil making me unsure whether I'm descending or ascending.

This is like a theme park somehow.

While thinking about that, a skeleton that I kicked left out a big magic core. Since the magic core got out in bare, I pick it up. It's impossible to do it for the ants.
I thought that it's strange so I checked on the log, it turns out that the thing that I just defeated was a bone golem not a skeleton. The level difference is 6, but it didn't feel different from the other small fries.

The enemies resistances are weak, I'm advancing through the trap smoothly too, however the road becomes dead end in front of me. According to the marker, there should be a path here though?

I check on the map, it's certainly a dead end here.
After double-checking, I understood that this maze is changing its joints with the passage of time. The sounds that I occasionally heard signified the changing of its joints.

What a uselessly amazing gimmick. It's something that even modern science would be hard-pressed to reproduce in a way.

I continue advancing the maze while checking the map whenever I hear the sounds.
Since I was running while minding the map, I'm plunging into a passage where a lot of slimes gathered.
It's finally the turn for the rapid-fire magic gun. They all die in just 3 burst,

but the ground becomes slimy it's disgusting.

◇

I've finally arrived at the large room in the center. This place is unmoving, serving as the halfway point. It's 5 meter high and 20 meter wide here.

When I got into the room, the door automatically closes and the magic formation on the center begins to shine.
An Iron Golem pushes out of the magic cirlce. Beside it, a beautiful blond woman like the one in the master room stands. This golem is fastened with rivets, looking like a pre-war thing.
I see now, this girl is a homonculus. That explains why there are several people with the same faces. Judging from their faces, I wonder if Mia is the base?

I change the rapid-fire gun mode from scatter to convergence.
The iron golem is close to 4 meter high. There are the same letters as the stone golem from the labyrinth on its forehead.

"You did good to have come this far, explorer-dono."

It's an easy-to-listen charming voice even in this situation. Though she's speaking in monotone so it breaks the immersion.

"I'm a merchant though."
"Merchant? ...O explorer! You did well to come here."

After looking puzzled while tilting her head, she tilted it back and continue to talk. She's moving like a doll.
You're insisting me to be an explorer huh.

"I'll give the excellent you the right to fight the guardian. If you could beat the guardian, I'll admit that you have the qualification to advance ahead. The winner will be given a reward from the master of the maze."
She was still speaking in monotone. It feels like in an elementary school festival.

The beautiful woman doesn't mind the unamused me and continues the talk, following the scenario.

"Now, let the fight begin. O iron giant, there is no need to hold back."

The woman gets to the corner of the room after finishing her long speech. Her face looks satisfied, or rather, proud.

After the woman got to the corner of the room, the iron golem starts moving.
I pierce the character on the golem's forehead with the rapid-fire magic gun. Changing [EMETH] to [METH] by destroying the [E]. The golem stops moving as according to the anecdote. Yes, like the anecdote from our world.

Probably not expecting this to end in an instant, the beautiful woman on the corner falls into confusion.
I ignore the woman and head toward the exit.

"You're careless!"

The beautiful woman attack with a rapier from behind while talking in monotone. It looks like she used some kind of reinforcing magic, her stab is reasonably faster than her level tells.
While being careful as not to break the woman's hand, I stop the rapier.

"Come to think of it, what is the reward for the winner anyway?"
"...Me?"

She tilted her head like before, and said so after hesitated for a bit. Why is it a question.

Apparently she didn't prepare any reward since she didn't think that I would win.
I make the woman faints, and take the rapier as the reward. Since the hilt design is cute, let's give it to Lulu or Zena-san as a present.

I lay the woman on the floor and advance ahead.

◇

Afterward, I arrived at the master room without any considerable setback. The latter half had traps, but since I avoided all of them with trap discovery skill, I didn't even know what kind of traps there were.

The magician is in the interior of the master room. There's Mia on the throne, but she seems to be still unconscious. Her HP has fully recovered, but her stamina is still only at about 30%.

"I really did not think that you would come this far so fast."
"Is that so? If possible I'd like to avoid fighting and just get Mia back."

The magician laughs.
I continue to step forward to the throne while talking. I'd rather not get thrown again into the underground lake if I ignore the magician.

"Impossible, that's impossible. You have shown your qualification by defeating the iron giant."

The magician's solo performance continues.

"However, your title is insufficient to go against me. I'll have you fight formidable adversaries so you could gain the title 'Hero'. As for your reward, I'll give you this holy sword, Gjallarhorn."

The magician pull the sword on his hand.
The AR indicates that the sword is a holy sword, Gjallarhorn. Its performance is inferior compared to the holy swords I have, but it's still incomparable to common magic swords.

I don't understand this guy's real intention.
Does he really only want to commit suicide?

"Your opponents are them."

The magician's shadow expands to the center of the room as he speaks. And

then, 3 iron golems appear from the shadow. Moreover, five beautiful women come out from the door beside the throne and line up behind the golems. Their faces are the same as the beautiful woman earlier, but since their hairstyles are different, they're probably not the same person.

"However, you would merely get killed by strong enemies like this, while the title hero is attained by overcoming life-and-death struggles."

From this guy's viewpoint, my level is 10. It shouldn't be possible to beat 3 level 30 golems.
The magician spreads his hands toward the heaven and continues his words.

"Therefore, I'll give everyone the blessing of my god--- Limit Break."

5-12. Maze of Trazayuya (3)

Satou's here. As I have always lived in the gluttonous Japan, I've never starved.
The wartime story in the olden days told by my great-grandmother felt like some kind of far away events.

◇

The purple aura gushing out from the magician not only wraps the women and the golems, but also me.

I check on the log for once, it seems that it was properly resisted. I didn't get the skill because it was probably a unique skill.

"Well then, I'm expecting a desperate struggle."

While saying so the magician runs his fingers on the maze core operation machine that looks like a music stand.
Walls come out to separate the throne from the hall in the master room.
From the map, it doesn't seem to be simple walls, but other blocks from the maze who have moved here.

I tilt my neck to avoid a magic arrow going straight to my face.
I look at where the arrow flew from, the former beautiful women who have turned into demonic figures are there. The golems which are coming here while flinging their arms around have the same atmosphere.
I could kill them instantly, but I'd use the golem to understand how the magician's unique skill works.

While dodging one, the other is coming.
While maintaining our distance, I concentrate firing the rapid-fire magic gun on a leg of the golem. The leg was destroyed after about 10 firings.
The third golem manages to body blow me. My HP is only decreased in a single digit although I don't know the exact value. Isn't it about as strong as

wagahai-kun?
Its level is still 30, but did it get stronger equaling to twice its level? I defeated the golem in the large room with one hit back then, so I can't compare these ones with it. I should've have fought it properly.
Still, if the unique skill only strengthen its recipients to double their level then it's nothing to worry about.

I ward off the next blow from the third golem and make it hit the second instead. The second golem's head is destroyed, but the third golem's fist which it used to hit the other golem also got destroyed.
I see, [Limit Break] is just as it says.

Using this opportunity, the former beautiful women are unleashing magic arrows in rapid successions. The magic arrows are being fired from magic circles that appear in front of their foreheads.
I properly avoid them, but it seems that they can persistently home in on the target. I don't think that I could avoid them forever so I shoot them down with the rapid-fire magic gun.

The 5 of them fired a lot. They sure have quite the MP to keep on it.

The second golem which got its head destroyed is still able to move. And then, it points both of its open hands to me.
Don't tell me.

Slightly different from my expectation, the golem fires all 10 of its fingers like missiles. I can effortlessly dodge those, but they explode when it got close to me.
Putting aside physical damage to my body, my clothes became tattered.

The magic arrows that was floating and aiming on the air are rushing to me, fired by the former beautiful women.

The golem which match its timing with the arrows attack approaches me with its fist. The first to reach is the fist.
Since I'm afraid the gun is affected by the explosion earlier, I'm not going to use it.
I jump on the golem fist and make it as foothold, but the arrows are going to hit me.

I unfasten my mantle with the quickdressing skill, and fling it to the nearby pillar to change my trajectory--

--I managed to evade the arrows and the fist.

The arrows pierced the golem but it only reduced its HP by less than 10%.
Even if they hit me, they'd only do little damage but I hate pain.

Rather than that, the former beautiful women's states are strange. How do I say it, their movements are now looking more like zombies than demons.
They're saying something like "Uuu~", or "Aaa~", painfully so yet they keep shooting the magic arrows.

Since I'm worried with the condition of the women, I've decided to make quick works of the golems.
I throw fragments falling from the golem in super high speed. The golem is pulverized whole, don't even mention the letters on their foreheads.

While I'm throwing it, I see the figures of the former beautiful women being ruined in typical fashions.
While bleeding from their eyes and pores, they're unleashing giant magic arrows, no, spears from magic circles in front of their whole bodies.
If I don't quickly stun them, they would really die.

I impatiently fix my posture and face toward the women.
However, it was too late.

As the magic spears unleashes upon me, the women's lives also disappear.
When their HP gauges became zero, their life burst over like some kind of game characters.

I do not take evasive action against the five spears and let them pierce my body.

It hurts.

"Why did you go that far."

I don't know if the girls', who were artificial life forms, senses of life were the same as me, but it's sorrowful.
If I think about the meaning the magic arrows which were too many then...

I destroy the remaining two golems who were approaching by using the fragment of the first golem.
Both the golem and homonculus are artificially made, but since the golems looks like robots, I didn't hesitate in destroying them. Deep inside, I probably perceive golems as machines and homonculus as humans.

After all the enemies have been eliminated, the hall with me alone becomes once again connected with the throne on the master room.
I set the title as that guy desired.

◇

The magician's applause is echoing through the hall.

"That was splendid. Welcome, new hero."

The magician's shadow brings me the holy sword.
I can't see the face of the magician with bent back because of the rainbow colored light emitting from the maze core behind him.

"Is your purpose a hero?"
"Indeed."
"Then, couldn't you just go to the Saga empire without doing this roundabout charade?"

I asked with harsh voice. I've been shocked with the tragic deaths of the women, my heart has become restless.

"Fumu, Parion's hero eh. When I went there, the hero had been sent back home."
"Don't you know that there's a next generation?"
"Ah, so it's already that season eh. However, the time is not right."
"What do you mean?"

"You wouldn't understand even if I explain."

It seems that he won't answer.
While having the dialogue, I'm calming my heart down.

"Hey magician, do you really only want to die?"
"The right answer to that question should be no."
"I don't want to have a Zen dialogue."

Hearing that answer, the magician is laughing like a mad man.
Two purple lights lines are sipping through his hood.

"Kuhahaha, I see, so you're a comrade who has also come from the land of the god."
"I don't know any such country."

No wait, I think ancient Japan has been called that a long time ago.

"Kakakaka, it's useless to put on false front, what did you pray, wish, and desire from the ruthless god?"
"I did not hope for anything."

I haven't even meet one.

"If there was one, then I had wished for a rest I guess?"

I wished hard for that one.

"Fuhahaha, such selflessness. Truly worthy to be a hero."
"You, what did you wish for?"

Yes, why is your race not human.

"Don't you know it? Don't you see it? Yes, I am the king of night, an immortal existence. What I wished from the omnipotent god was a body that won't die, a live without starvation, and power to strike back at unreasonable violence."
"So that's why you were born with that body..."

The magician shakes his head while spreading his arms horizontally.

"You're reading too far. The god had let me reincarnated in a body of a healthy baby. And arranged me to be raised by good parents who I could respect, and met a pure lovely spouse who was more than I deserved."

Then, why?

"I became too accustomed with my new life. Even though I was robbed by unreasonable violence in my previous life, in this life it was done differently."

The magician takes off his hood.

"I was prisoned by a noble who fell in love with my wife and executed under false charge. The first view that I saw when I was resurrected in this figure was the head of my whole family starting with my parents in front of the castle. And underneath them was my broken doll-like corpse of my wife..."

Tears aren't dripping on his white cheeks.
Purple flames are raging from his eyes sockets.

"Your pity is unnecessary. I changed the corpses of my whole family into undead, and along with the corpses of the people with the same circumstance as me, we bared our fangs toward the noble and completely destroyed everything."

There is no way for him to shed tears.
Because his figure is that of a white skeleton.

"I, who had completed my revenge, intended to depart to the next world where my wife is waiting. However, the blessing from the god cannot allow that. Even with the purification technique (Turn Undead), or with the holy sword that I got with much hardship, I wasn't able to die."

He said, "Truly god's blessing (curse)."

"Come now, hero. I've said all that need to be said. Stab me to bring my end! At the very least, kill me before even my heart turned into demon lord."

The magician Zen, no, Immortal King (No-Life King) Zen, said so.
<TLN: No-Life King is a direct katakana translation from the author so there's no other interpretation possible>

Accepting those words filled with insanity, I pull out the holy sword, Gjallarhorn.
It's a curious sword with drill-shaped edges.

I raise the sword as if praying, then stab No-Life King Zen with all my might.

"Kuha, kuhahaha. Ena, my other half of wings. I'm going to you now..."

Zen's body is destroyed by crumbling into dust.
The robe falls and spreads out on the ground.

I could faintly hear, "My gratitude", in the end.

>Title [No-Life King Slayer] acquired
>Title [Maze Traveler] acquired

5-13. Maze of Trazayuya (4)

Satou's here. Whenever I played a game for the first time I never skip any event until the end, maybe because my job was making games.
If the game is not to my liking, I didn't enjoy it until the end and went to dispose it on a second-hand store, Satou.

◇

"Kusukusukusu, it's a failure huh."
"Yup, a failure."

Two purple lights emerge from the crumbled remains of Zen.

"Goodbye, hero."
"This is your victory."

I reflexively cut those lights with the holy sword since I feel evil intent from them. However, the lights which had been scattered away gather themselves back and rise into the sky.

"Let's meet again."
"See you."

The lights penetrate the ceiling and disappear before long.

◇

Were those angels? I felt maliciousness from them though.
But, I don't have the leisure to think about it. Because--

『System Message. This maze will begin to enter into self-destruct

sequence. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately. I repeat』

---I heard that announcement.
I rush to Mia and make her who's still unconscious to drink magic potion with restorative effect. Since the medicine hasn't been tested, I give her one third at a time. She wakes up exactly with one bottle.

"Mia, do you recognize me?"
"...Onii-chan?"

I am not.
Mia's blurred eyes become focused.

"Here is?"
"The master room of Trazayuya Maze."

Hearing me, Mia hurriedly look for the magician.

"It's alright, he is no more. He won't show up in front of you anymore."
"Really?"
"Yes really."

This is not the time to have a carefree talk like this.

『The self-destruct sequence has been executed. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately.』

I have to stop it quickly.

"Mia, can you stop this maze from self-destructing?"
"I'll try."

Mia unsteadily walks to the operation board.
She tries to operate something for a while, but then she shakes her head.

"Impossible."

She gave up fast.

After asking for more detail from Mia, it seems that every functions has been locked somehow. So it's helpless even for the maze's master.

I somehow know that this maze would explode if I destroy the maze core. Let's bet on my physical strength and escape by running then.

I carry Mia who has given up and staring at the floor under my arm.

"This will be dangerous, so hold me tight."

Without looking at Mia who's nodding, I run.

◇

I'm running through the passage.

Running.

And running.

At first, Mia was screaming loudly but she falls into silent now. It seems that she has fainted.
I mow down skeletons or ants which came out from time to time and continue to run. It's a bit tough to protect Mia from the falling debris.

We finally get to midway, the central room.

Inside the room, I take the still unconscious big-breasted beautiful woman (Homonculus) on my shoulder, on the opposite side where I hold Mia.

Even though I couldn't save her friends, I'll save one even for my own self-satisfaction.
I'm a hypocrite if I do say so myself.

Even after carrying more luggages, my speed isn't falling. It just becomes a bit hard to keep the balance.

I jump through the trompe l'oeil stair with one leap.

Okay, it's just 4 levels left.

When I got there, I could feel vibration and hear thick explosion sounds from the depth.

『System Message, the Subsystem has been activated. The Maze Core has lost its power to support facilities due to entering self-destruct sequence. This maze will self-destruct soon. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately. I repeat』

While listening to that robotic voice, my feet aren't stopping.

Damn, if there's a subsystem, then couldn't we stop the self-destruct there? If only the map has the control room written or something.

I'm feeling eerie vibration from my feet, maybe the collapse is starting.

3 levels left.

A block falls in front of my eyes.
Without losing my momentum, I kick the falling block and make it flies to the other side.

I couldn't keep Mia and the woman unhurt while doing that kind of acrobatic feat. I'll let you two drink as many potions as you want when we get out so please bear with it for now.

2 levels left.

An especially strong vibration occurs, and makes the passage's turn just ahead to cave-in.
I look back the opposite side, but the upper level has collapsed too, blocking the path.

And, the ceiling here is also collapsing.

I put Mia and the woman on the ground near my feet.

I hold the ceiling with both my hands, but the ceiling breaks facing my crushing power. I protect Mia and the woman from the falling fragments. Do we have no choice but to get buried like this?

A piece of the falling debris hits Mia. Mia's health decreases by 10%. The woman also only has 30% remaining.

『The trainee's health has decreased. In accordance to the top priority of training program, ejecting the trainee outside the maze. Other trainees are to be separated from the particular trainee as to not get dragged into the teleportation.』

Is this what the Trazayuya guy mean in his memo?

◇

The three of us succeeded escaping with the safety program for trainee (elf).
I'm apologizing for making fun of the over protectiveness inside my mind.

I make Mia to drink the homemade potion. I let the woman drinks one too while I'm at it. The AR shows that the woman only has No.7 on its name's row. She doesn't have an actual name huh.

I recognize this place but I'll check the map just to be sure. It's near the place where I got out of the Trazayuya maze master room.
I see a cliff with water strongly gushing out of it. That's probably water overflowing from the underground lake.
The water flow becomes weak while I look at it, so I jump to the cliff and check on the map.
There may be someone who needs help.

According to the map, the survivors are me and one other. Slime-kun lives on it seems. There's no other survivor huh.

But in just a moment, the slime's HP is exhausted.

Rest in peace.

Right at that time.

The log begins to flow with great speed.
This hasn't happened since the time with meteor shower.

I scroll through the loot on the log. "Defeated all enemies on the map" is written there. I see, so this is the condition to trigger <<Automatic Loot>>.

There is no [Source] thing this time.

I move all the new loot to Trazayuya Maze folder.
Most of them are the remains of monsters and broken machineries.
There are also several magic books, they're probably magician Zen's belonging right?

Since the vibration still continue, the collapse probably is still continuing, I go back to where Mia and the woman are.

>Title [Survivor] Acquired

5-14. Joining

Satou's here. I want riddle to be called mystery.
With this brutal adventure life, I'm saying goodbye to carefree sightseeing trip, Satou.
<TLN: If you haven't noticed, these "Satou's here" preludes will only get weirder lol>

◇

Zen, Zen, Zen huh, I was overwhelmed by his drive, and made to dance according to his plan. He was probably satisfied, but it was a real nuisance to get involved.

Still, even though I've murdered someone because of the course of the event, I don't feel any remorse. It's not just because of my high MND but probably also because his outer appearance was that of a skeleton and he looked happy in the end.

I pull myself together. First, let's check on Arisa and the girls' situation. It seems that Liza is a bit hurt but everyone is safe. They're not in the camping ground but already near Seryuu city.
Somehow they thought that, "When it's morning", meant that they should get to the worker's guild before morning. I meant to say, "Depart when it's morning", but it was difficult to complete it.

I could tell them my safety if we have cellphones, but it can't be helped if it doesn't exist. Let's look for something with the same function when we got to the royal capital and labyrinth city.

Now then, it'd be difficult to traverse through 5 mountains when it's this dark. Putting aside my physical strength, my mental state is weary. I want to rest at least until dawn.

Should I take a rest until dawn here?

I've thought of heartless things, when I think about it, I remember that I shouldn't leave Arisa and the girls alone. If they, slaves they are, come back alone then wouldn't they be treated as escaped slaves?
The knight Soun who guards the front gate is a big hearted person, but I'm not sure if that applies to slaves and demi-humans too.

My health is already fully recovered, and my stamina is still at 90% anyway. I hate to think like an athlete, but let's psyche myself up.
Of course I'll also take Mia, who I'm carrying on my shoulder, and No.7 (homonculus) along. If I leave them here, they'd fall preys to wolves then there'd be no point in me saving them from the maze.

I wrap Mia and No.7 each in thick sheets. By chance, Mia now looks like at the time when she was first handed to me by the red-helmet.

>[Packing Skill Acquired]

I put Mia on top of No.7, and carry both of them on my arms. They call this, bridal carry. If I have common physical strength I'd be down in just a few minutes, but the me now could carry them for many hours without problem. When I try to walk, Mia almost slips out so I wrap one more mantle on the two to stabilize them.

I push my way through the mountain road while carrying the two.

◇

I haven't even run through the mountain road for a few minutes before, like usual,

>[Off-Road Skill Acquired]

comes up, so I put points to it until the maximum and activate it.
Incidentally, I also enable the [Sprint] skill in similar manner. I might be wasting points but there's still about 90% of it remaining so it's fine.

I've been thoughtlessly using them up until now, but seeing those purple lights, I feel like I'd get involved with troubles. I've decided to carefully examine each of my skills and use half of my points to strengthen myself after I've reunited with Arisa and the girls.

I'm passing over a place that looks like the ruins of rat-man village after 10 minutes of running. Was this the village where Mia met the red-helmet again?
I'm interested, but I have to keep going through the mountain now.

I can somehow identify good thickets to jump from, I wonder if this is thanks to off-road skill. I can't tell it as clearly as the trap-discovery skill could to traps, is this because the difference in natural and man-made things?
Probably thanks to the off-road skill added with sprint skill, I'm even considerably faster than a horse-drawn wagon. Moreover, combined with 3D-maneuver skill, I'm passing through the mountain almost in a straight line. I feel like some kind of ninja from a manga.

After crossing two mountains, dead trees begin to decrease and greeneries are becoming rich.

At such time, I see interesting place with shinning lily of the valley-like flowers and flickering mushrooms on the middle of the way. I want to look closer but time is precious now, so I give up. Since it's regrettable, I put a marker on the map for the place.
Mia and the woman sometimes get tangled with branches that stick out but I destroy it by flicking coins with my hand.
I run through the mountain relying on the moonlight. It feels like the moon in this world is awfully bright.

After the fourth mountain, a Giant Boar jumps on me. I've noticed it on the radar, but since it suddenly jumps here, I just kick it away.
I've been avoiding small animals who jump my way so far, but as expected, it's impossible to do so with a bear-sized giant boar.
Its head which got hit directly went with a splat, I averted my eyes. Without looking at its scattered head, I put it into the storage before it falls onto the ground as a souvenir for Liza. Since I've seen Liza dismantling it several times already, I may have become accustomed it. Even though I'm boasting

now, I'm confident that I'd have abandoned it if it was not dark.

And then we finally get to the highway. From here, it's 80 kilometers away to Seryuu city in straight line. There's one and half hour until dawn.
I run pass the hilly areas in straight line. The grounds are scooped out but no one would mind it anyway, probably.

◇

I'm thinking while running. The thing with Arisa and Zen, I feel I have a luck (Hard Luck) that gets me tend to be involved with humans who have been given power by the gods. I can't think that they're all existences with good will.

Does the gods in this world enjoy themselves by giving people trial?
Or, are they like mythological gods from Northern Europe and Greece where they have human-like trait with both evil and good?
No, there's also possibility of devils pretending to be gods like in the bible.

There's no answer with just just guessing. Later in our journey, let's look for more information about gods if I see a big temple or library.
Then I could compare the informations I got to Arisa's own.

Still, seeing this trend, there are other reincarnated people out there right? And even with them around, this world's culture and civilization didn't collapse huh.
Maybe the people who were chosen were like me, who actively does not intend to spread modern-world knowledge.
People who love conspiracy theory probably would say that the reincarnated person who's spreading modern-world knowledge would be removed by some kind of power.

Now then, the magician Zen said that he became No-Life King after he was executed by a noble.
What I'm worried about when I heard that story is my unique skill [Indestructible]. They sounds too similar. I'm afraid that I'd also become No-Life King or Demon Lord if my HP becomes zero.

<TLN: I translated it as Immortal back then, but it's more appropriate to be Indestructible so I'll change it for now. We'll see how the author play this out.>

Were the skills I saw from Zen in camping ground, like [Physical Attack Invalid] or [Instant Recovery] unique skills? Maybe it was because of those two skills that he wasn't able to kill himself.
This is only a guess from what I gathered from his talks, but [Hero] title combined with a holy sword are probably able to invalidate the two skills. Perhaps the demon lord has the same requirement too, or am I just thinking too much?

However, in comparison I was able to completely annihilate the heavenly dragons and the dragon god without any title. The meteor shower might have the same effect as [Hero and holy sword], but I feel that conclusion is too light.
I think that the dragons may be existences that hunt the demon lords, but they may also be a race that specialize in attack. I'm not really satisfied with this, but until I get new informations, let's conclude that for now.

◇

While recollecting the things that I talked about with Zen, I remember to put my title back to [None]. While I'm at it, I also change my level on the Exchange tab. Since Arisa and Liza have leveled up, I also raise my level to 12.

The growth of Arisa and the girls are like these

Arisa.... Level 10=>12, Skills are omitted
Lulu... Level 2=>3, Skills are [Etiquette], [Marshalling(new)]
Liza... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Spear], [Thrusting], [Dismantling], [Cooking], [Heavy Blow(new)]
Pochi... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Short Sword], [Throwing], [Dismantling], [Enemy Search], [Shooting(new)]
Tama... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Short Sword], [Throwing], [Dismantling], [Collecting], [Enemy Search]

Lulu's new skill [Marshalling] is not bad, but I'd have loved if she learned [Cooking].
In a game, you could assign skill for party members but reality isn't so convenient.

Come to think of it, I have [Education] skill if I recall right.
Maybe I could teach intended skills with this? I'll work together with Lulu to try it next time.

◇

I'm looking at the map every 10 minutes, but there's still nothing but me in this highway. Arisa and the girls have arrived in front of the Seryuu city's gate.
I've done an impossible thing by getting to the place where I could see Seryu city in 40 minutes. I'd say that my speed was 120 KM/H in average. Since I lowered my speed when I reached highway as not to break them, you could guess yourself what my speed was on the hills.

When I got out of the last forest I began to walk normally since I could possibly be seen by the Seryuu city's scouts.
There are only 3 kilometers left anyway, and the gate isn't going to open for 50 minutes.

I came into a slightly elevated place 2 kilometers away from Seryuu city. I could not only see the outer wall from here, but also the entire gate. Our wagon can be seen in a distant.
While I look at it, the wagon starts to come toward here. Apparently, someone has seen me. The one with sharp eye, Tama I wonder?

The wagon comes into my view, Liza is operating it. Pochi and Tama lean out of the wagon as if they're about to fall and are waving at me. Arisa and Lulu are anxiously looking toward here, seems that they can't see me yet.
I put Mia and the woman on one of my arm smoothly, and then I wave back at them.
Still, everyone look strange. I've thought that they would worry about me

but aren't they worrying too much?

Before long, the wagon comes into view while raising dust clouds.
I put the two on the side of the road and go to greet everyone.

The wagon makes a sudden stop, then Pochi and Tama who descend like they're tumbling down run here.
Bam, with that sound, Liza who jumps over Pochi and Tama from the coachman's seat runs here first. "Mafter", she says in a loud muffled cry while strongly hugging me. Losing her body weight, I support her center of gravity. Liza is crying like a flood while hugging me.
While I was surprised with Liza's unexpected behavior, Pochi and Tama climb up my body and Liza and hug me from both sides.

"Wlcome~""Nano desu!"

Maybe because they can't express their relief well, they're thoroughly play-biting my head and shoulders, and licking my face. This is intense.

Arisa and Lulu who come down from the wagon late aren't able to interrupt the intense hugs. "Welcome home.", said Arisa while looking at the ground, and said Lulu gracefully.

"I'm home, I'm sorry to worry you."

Liza is still crying while hugging me, but when she hears my voice she replies with a weak tearful voice. And then, seemingly aware that she's hugging me, she shyly parts away from me.
Matching her, I put Tama and Pochi on the ground and pat their heads.

"We were worried nodesu!""Any injury~?"

Pochi and Tama look at me worryingly, Lulu is looking at me while smiling, and then Arisa pushes to the front while still looking a bit at the ground.
She's not like the usual Arisa?

"...I, I was worried! Mou, promise me to never do something that absurd ever again!!"

Arisa resolves herself to raise her face and come up with words. Tears are swelling up on her large eyes.
I gently hug her while apologizing, and lightly pat her back.
She seemingly isn't able to hold back anymore, begins crying, and I comfort her. Maybe because they're swept away with it, Pochi and Tama also begin to cry together with Arisa. Lulu and Liza who look on us from a distance are also moved to tears.

I've decided to apologize for how many time, however many, until everyone stops crying. The pouring tears and scolding from everyone who was worried about me, warm my slightly hardened heart. And then, I continue to apologize until the sky turns white.

5-15. Joining (2)

Satou's here. It's not my intention to, but I can't help but lock on it when big breasts are presented in front of me.
Wanting a stout heart that won't lose to temptation, Satou's.

◇

I wonder if Arisa feels refreshed after crying her eyes out, she immediately asks me barrages of questions about my circumstance. I put aside the hard to talk things like about hero thing, or the purple lights, or reincarnated person and only roughly explain about how the magician has accomplished his goal and won't after Mia with the ants and monsters.

"Uuu~, you're hiding various things from me right?"
"Well yeah, I'll tell you about it when the time is right."

It's not exactly pleasant but it concerns Arisa too so I'll talk about it with her when it's only the two of us.

"Promise me! I'm fine doing it during our bed talk too."

It's good that she's back to her usual self.
I unwrap Mia and No.7 and put them on the wagon.

"Wait a minute, leaving aside the elf girl, what is this busty beautiful woman? Tell me what you were you talking about with the magician~~~!"

Arisa's screams are echoing.
Since it likely would reach Seryuu city, I stop her.

"You understand right? The identity of this person!"

Arisa nods to my words. Since the woman's real nature is a homonculus.

Mia finally wakes up from this uproar, and looks around unsteadily.

"...A dream?"
"It's not."
"Are we saved?"
"Narrowly, yes."

Mia's expression is changing while responding briefly. I tell to her what I told Arisa.

"I do not know the courtesy of humans. My mother who was with me for more than 100 years said that even though she didn't explain anything to me, I would understand that it's different when I go outside."

Oh, Mia is speaking with long sentences.

"If I may, a 『Thank you』 is enough. If the other person is a young man, then say it together with a laugh and a smile."

Arisa readily answers to Mia. Something isn't right though?

I see now, Mia was talking in Shiga kingdom language. When I ask her later, she's able to talk it right from the beginning. When I ask her why she didn't use it, I get the, 『Human language make feels like I'm talking while clattering, I hate it』, nuance from her answer.

Mia stands up, corrects her appearance and bows politely.

"Thank you, Satou."
"You're welcome."

Come to think of it, this is the first time I'm thanked by Mia.
I reply back without making fun of it.

"Let me introduce myself once more. I am the youngest elf of Bornean forest, daughter of Lamisauya and Lilinatoa, Misanalia Bornean."

While saying, "You have my utmost gratitude.", she kisses my forehead.

>Title [Friend of the Elves] Acquired

◇

"This woman is?"
"Oh yeah, I forgot about it. You got more woman again?"
"Master is filthy."
"Matter of course huh."

After the event with Mia ends, the topic returns to no.7.
Mia, Arisa, and Lulu are speaking like I'm a husband who's caught cheating.
I shake No.7 who faints looking so happy.

"...Good morning?"
"Yup, good morning. Do you understand the situation?"
"Please wait a moment."

She spoke without intonation like always. She's contemplating while tilting her head to one side, seems it's her habit.
Since Arisa who's nearby says, "Gross", I straighten her up.

"An instruction remains in the message queue. Since the previous master has died, My ownership has been resigned as a result. According to other records, you have the qualification to be the new master."

No.7 stops there and waits for my answer.
Well, I won't complain if a big-breasted beautiful woman become our companion. Her master, Zen, has died and there probably aren't anymore of her friends remain.

Before I can open my mouth, Arisa reacts first. "No, that's not how it is.", she says to No.7, pulls her behind the wagon and talks secretly with her.

"Master, please sit here~ Everyone else sit here~"

After that, I'm going along with Arisa's favorite small theatric play. It's a parody of some kind but I don't know what it is at all. Then, while I'm still

confused, it becomes that No.7 calls me master while she gets [Nana] as her new name.
<TLN: Nana means seven, yes, Satou's terrible at naming people lol>

Although Arisa gives me a look when she heard the name, I'd like you to spare me on this since I don't have any naming sense.
I don't understand the meaning for the small drama until the end but No.7's title has changed from [Zen's Doll] to [Satou's Servant], so there might some kind of profound meaning to it.

"Please take care of me from now on, Nana."
"Yes, master. From now on, please treat me well."

...What did you teach this time, Arisa.

◇

After getting a new companion, I decided to take Mia to the manager of worker's guild. Mia has someone from the same tribe to rely on, unlike the other girls.

Since my deeds to stay in Seryuu city is still valid, I can enter the gate without tax. And since it doesn't seem possible for this to apply to other members, I go alone to call the manager.

"Hello, Nadi-san."
"Hello. Eh? Satou-san, didn't you depart yesterday?"
"Yes, actually a lost elf child has fallen under my care, so I'm making a visit here thinking in borrowing the manager's help."
"You're a good person, you even come back for that."

Nadi-san greeted me pleasantly, but I feel like the last one is mixed with a bit of shock.

"The manager is still asleep, so I'll wake him for you. Please make yourself comfortable on this sofa while you wait."

While saying that, Nadi-san briskly cleans up menswear and magazine-like books on the sofa to make some spaces. They're most likely the manager's. While I wait, I pick up a magazine-like book. It's a gossip magazine that cover Shiga kingdom related topic. There aren't more than 10 pages, but I flip through it since I feel nostalgic. Articles such as the outcome of love between a noble girl and an explorer somewhere, or map for 'service' on the royal capital are abundant.

I'm hearing the sound of Nadi-san who wakes the manager up from the floor above.
The two come downstairs when I'm reading an article about competition of some famous fighters in an arena.

"I'm sorry to disturb you."
"...Where is she?"
"Mou, manager! When you talk to an ordinary person, please talk more properly. I'm sorry, Satou-san. Where is the elf girl?"

I thought that he was in bad mood for being woken up back then, but this guy is just taciturn huh. Maybe elves default character are taciturn?
I guide the two to the open space outside the gate where my wagon is waiting. The worker's guild wasn't put with [Closed] signboard or something, was that alright?

I ask Lulu who was in the coachman's stand to call Mia.

"Mia? I can't believe it, the lost child is Misanalia?"
"Yes, do you know her?"
"Ah."

He could speak fluently when he was speaking to himself but it's just a word for the reply huh? Nadi-san looks at the manager with troubled face. I see, I understand now why this guy is always sleeping in the store.

"Yuya?"
"Mia."
"Nn."
"Ran away?"
"No."

"Lost"No""
"Lia?"
"House."
"I see."
"Why?"
"...Cleaning up."

Their words exchanges in elf language are interesting. I can guess the intentions but I'd like an interpreter for the actual conversations. Mia only denies when it's about being lost, then they continue to mutually understand.
With the help of Nadi-san, I generally understand their conversations.
Manager(Yuya)-san is an elf who comes from the same hometown as Mia. He came to Seryuu city 10 years ago to clean up the mess that his granduncle had created. He didn't mention it, but it's most likely about the Trazayuya maze.
I report to him about the thing with the magician who kidnapped Mia. He had an underground hideout in the rat-man's territory which looks like a maze, and that when we escaped from it, the maze self-destructed burying it along with the magician.

"Go home?"
"Won't"
"I see."
"Have work to do."

Nadi-san became a bit anxious with the flows of the story, but she was back to be beaming with smiles after hearing the manager's words.

"What do?"
"Go home."
"Can you?"
"Together with Satou."

It seems that the manager asked if she could go back home, but Mia said that she'd be fine with me. Really, they could understand well with just that. If you're acquainted with someone for more than 100 years, I guess you'd end up understanding what each other is thinking.

Lastly, the manager tells me, "I'm counting on you". Then the manager and Nadi-san
pulls us along when they're going back to their shop, and negotiate with the knight Soun to make ID for Mia. I consult with the two if they can do something to make Nana able to create an ID, and the manager says, "Leave it to me.", while using magic art, [Fake Patch], to camouflage Nana's tribe into [Human].
At the same time, the manager warns us that this magic can only deceive replica Yamato stone while the original which was present when we got out of the labyrinth back then and Status Check ability could see through it.
By the way, the AR shows me, [Tribe: Human][Tribe: Homonculus], when I look at Nana, while appraisal skill gives me, [Tribe: Human (Fake)].

For the time being, thanks to the manager and Nadi-san, the two got their ID safely. With this we'll be able to visit towns in the middle of our journey.
When we're waiting for the ID to finish, the manager gives me a bag containing money while saying, "Nn".

"Please use this for Mia's travel expense. Though it's only a little since it's manager's secret saving."
"Said too much."

The manager complains with the added information from Nadi-san.

"I'll gratefully receive it."

I receive it and put it on the pouch.
We don't particularly need it, but it would be rude to decline this. I'll give it all to Mia later.
I promise the manager and Nadi-san who see us to send them a letter when we get to the forest.

The wagon advances through the same road as yesterday.
I pray for this to become a peaceful journey with nothing happening, and the wagon continues one while rattling.

Intermission: At Territorial Army

I hear rustling noise of equipments.
Uuu~, the break is already over huh.

The punctual Iona hasn't woke me up, which mean there's still time. I'll enjoy dozing off for a little more.

"Guhaaa!"

What are you doing to a helpless beautiful girl.
A chain mail is suddenly thrown onto my stomach, I get up while moving it aside.

"Hey Ruu. Wake me up more gently."

I complain to the only possible culprit, Ruu.
Iona and Zena-chi never do it like this.

"Just get up already. You're running out of the time to take a meal you know."

What!? I can't let that happen.
I get up and wash my face. Since it's troublesome to use the ladle, I draw water from water basin to the jug directly. If Iona and Zena-chi found out about this, they'd scold me.

"What's on the menu today?"
"Seems black bread and stew."
"Eeeh~ I'd like goat meat or steak sometimes."
"What's with those luxuries, even captain-class doesn't get them."

I amuse myself with the chats while wiping my face with my favorite towel.

"If I became a mistress of a noble, would I be able to eat them everyday~?"
"Nowadays, looks like even nobles have it rough, so you probably won't get many delicious things too?"

Iona doesn't dream big eh~ even though she's from a branch family of a noble. Guess that's why her excitement has been dulled~

I throw my pajama which is a knee-length shirt on top of the bed, and take out an underwear and armors from my own shelf.

"Oi, Lilio. Don't show me your dirty ass."
"What a rude thing to say~ even though it's this cute."

You don't have to see it, Ruu.
It's not like I like I'm an exhibitionist, so I wear my underwear. I'm wearing a short shirt on my top. Ruu and Iona wear breast wraps. Unfortunately, me and Zena-chi don't have much need for ones.
Of course I'd wear a cute shirt and breast wrap when I go on a date, but that's only if I have a boyfriend. I wear armor on the top anyway, it'd only be painful to wear an unneeded breast wrap.

After I finish wearing the chain mail, I put on the sturdy metal-reinforced leather boots and Zena-chi comes just right after.

Ara, how cute.
What she's wearing is Iona's if I'm not mistaken, with lots of frills, Iona's charm point is how showy she is. Isn't that the clothes she was boasting about when she bought it after saving up for half a year.
Good grief, everyone is sweet to Zena-chi.

I've thought that Zena's done changing and have taken a seat on the cafeteria already, but wearing that clothes, don't tell me.

"Zena-chi, you had a date with the boy right?"
"Da... n, no. He was worried about something so we were just having a talk."

That's what you call a date.
Still, seeing your beloved while lacking sleep due to the current overloaded working condition, how lovable.

"Lilio, your hands have stopped. If you don't change fast, you'll really miss your meal you know?"
"Hoo~i."

Reproved by Iona, I continue wearing my clothes.

Zena-chi folds a pink stole really carefully on top of the bed.

Oh? Isn't that the newest color from Pinen clothing store from the center district?
Zena-chi is certainly a noble, but I don't think a daughter of a noble lineage could be that extravagant.

"Zena-chi, what's with that stole? Don't tell me, it's a gift from the boy?"
"Ehehe～."

Uwah, Zena's face is becoming lovestruck.

"I was given it by Satou-san. It was a product from Pinen-san's store Lilio told me back then～."

You're amazing, boy. Even cheap things in that place should be around 2-3 silver coins.
I wonder if he's a stupid son of a large store owner from somewhere? I pray that Zena isn't being played.
She's taking off her clothes, and I let it slide when she stealthily unfasten her breasts paddings. It was a date after all, some charms were needed for woman right.

"Zena-san, please change your clothes quickly too. Since we won't make it for the meal, do you want me to make some sandwiches?"
"No, I already had a meal, so I'm alright."
"Did you have a feast?! You had a feast right～～～."

After Zena-chi finished taking off her clothes, she gives it to Iona and she's closing on me while fetching her equipments.

"I did not. I just had some sweets while teaching Satou-san how to chant."

I am being dragged by Ruu and Iona to the cafeteria while Zena-chi is speaking fondly, "When I was going to sit down on a bench, he laid out a handkerchief on it you know."
Oh no, isn't that guy quite a playboy?

◇

The next day, I'd be on the bed all day since I'm off-duty, but I change my clothes and go out.

The sweets reserve in my room has ran out. Zena-chi is on duty today, and she's going to guard until midnight today just because she can use magic. Since it'd be pitiful if there's no sweets when she gets back, this kind Lilio-sama will buy it for her.

Well~, it's important for a popular woman to be attentive!

There's a familiar figure on the plaza in front of the castle.
It's the boy--- Zena-chi's beloved. He's wearing an expensive-looking clothes like usual. Looks like he's back from shopping, he's carrying a lot of books.
If you buy that many, you could just hire a manservant.

Since my mischievous heart grows excited, I creep on his back and talk to him while imitating Zena.

"Hello, nimble Onii-san."

The boy turns around and speaks normally. Tsk, he's not surprised huh.

"Hello, Lilio-san. Did you imitate Zena-san?"
"Ehehe~ Did I pass? Hey hey, did you skip a beat?"

Ooh~ he remembers his girlfriend's best friend's name even though he meet me only once. No~ It's hard to be beautiful~ What should I do if he's fallen for me.

"Are you alone today?"
"Yep, the other soldiers are sleeping~ But Zena, from yesterday noon until midnight today, is keeping on guard the who~le time. Magic troops are lacking in number isn't it."

It looks like he wants to talk with me, but it doesn't seems like he's going to

seduce me. He's not making a pass to this beautiful me, that means maybe he's not flirtatious?
Since the topic is about Zena-chi.

"Lilio-san, could you deliver a message for Zena-san?"
"Okay~ But no passionate lines that would make chest hot okay? If it's too intense, it might be interpreted wrong you know~."

I don't want to whisper love words to Zena-chi. Although since we're in women barrack, something like that do occasionally happen, because we live for friendship.

"I've decided to go to the labyrinth city for a business trip."

That's quite far. Isn't that on the far-most side of this country?

"Hee~ you're going on a long expedition again huh."
"Yes, I've stocked goods which are in shortage there."
"That so~, you're a merchant after all. When are you departing?"
"That, I plan to depart early morning tomorrow."

Acha~ Zena's first love end up unrequited huh~.
Let's treat her something next time.

"I understand, I'll properly convey it."
"Yes, I'm counting on you."

After saying so, the boy nods and leaves with a horse-drawn carriage away.

◇

When I get back to the barrack, everyone are gathering and having talks in the cafeteria. It's still a long time before the meal, is there something happening?
I ask the squad who are talking beside me.

"Yana-chi, did something happen?"

"Ah, Lilio, listen to this."

It's a good choice to ask Gayana-chi who loves to talk. They're told that the territorial army has announced the application for personnel selection for deployment in the labyrinth city. The deployment is going to take two months.

But, even though they say that it's training, in actuality it's about hunting monsters in the haunts right?
I will absolutely pass on this~.

However, judging from the buzz around, there are a lot of people who want to go. It seems that they add one silver coins for each month on the pretext of training. It's an amount that couldn't be ignored for us, underpaid soldiers. Furthermore, looks like the sales of magic cores we get from the labyrinth will be split equally for soldiers.
The danger is great, but the return is just as big. Danger is everywhere anyway. Even a senior demon appeared recently during my normal duty in Seryuu duty. If the silver mask-sama hadn't arrived at that time, I would be six-feet under right now.

That reminds me, the boy is going to the labyrinth city.
This is just right, I could aid Zena-chi's love while getting rich, let's apply for the selection.
Since Zena-chi won't be back until midnight, let's talk to Ruu and Iona first.
Ruu isn't going to complain as long as she could get stronger, and Iona is unexpectedly greedy, she should be easy to persuade.

I don't know if we'd get selected, but let's work hard~.

Intermission: Labyrinth and Fairy

"Sensei! Houya and the others had gone to the goblin's nest!"

The one who boorishly breaks this elegant afternoon tea time is the home fairy (Brownie) entrusted with taking care of this ivy mansion, Giril.
Giril who's usually very calm is panicking with popping eyes.

It's not the time for me to be so calm. I wear my familiar magic clothes made from Yuriha fiber and take my favorite cane with one hand, then I go out. At the outside, my attendant who has already completed his preparation, Dohar--a very sturdy Dwarf--accompanies me to the labyrinth on the outskirts of Selbira.

This comes a bit late, but I'm a nature art user who hails from Bornean forest and the one who has broken through level 50 after devoting myself for 500 years. The name is Trazayuya Bornean. Recently, I've been called elf sage instead of my name.

"Boss, the kids seem to have taken the chick kids."
"I see."
"It seems they want to be acknowledged by the chick kids."
"Let's hurry."
"Hei!"

The kids Dohar mentions are someones who have followed me here from Bornean forest, Houya-- Houlsetaya, along with 5 others young elves. They, who were level 5-6 when they first got here, have approached level 20 in rapid growth now. They're young ones with bright futures. Since there are a lot of elves who finish their lives uneventfully without even crossing level 10, they're worth to be specially mentioned. They're a bit thoughtless but it can't be helped since they're still young, being less than 300 years old. They will settle down with time.
They'll grow up, become more discreet, before long they will pass over me, and if they gain influence in the world, the elves position will also go up. That is my very wish. To have the elves regain back the leadership of the world is my dream.

At the end of last month, around 15 young elves had come asking for my guidance, I wondered if the news about the kids' rapid growth had traveled to the hometown. They're clearly younger than Houya and the others. The youngest one is my distant nephew, Yusalatouya, at only 150 years old.

I've thought of making them into a group of five people and let Dohar makes them get accustomed with the labyrinth but it seems that Houya and the others have taken them to the labyrinth to brag themselves. Another reason is probably the fair-looking Lulilutoa who's also a master of Lute-playing being one those who've arrived recently. Appealing to women is a common thing regardless of age or race after all.

Dohar shows his red metal explorer plate to the gatekeeper who guards the entrance to the labyrinth on the west side of Selbira. That gatekeeper has known us since he was a new recruit, but he has never not checked for the plate for the past 20 years. It's quite commendable, but since right now I'm worried with the safety of the young ones, I can't help but feel annoyed. I'm still lacking in discipline.

After we're finished with the checking, we descend the stairway to come into semi-basement and continue through the passage. The passage is 10 meter wide and 5 meter high which meanders for about 2 Km. They made it to be twisted so when monsters overflow from the labyrinth, they would be slowed down.
One meter above is the ceiling that acts like dormer window that could be opened, while soldiers are patrolling outside. This 2 kilometers passage are used to preemptively shoot to death monsters which could come out overflowing from the labyrinth.
Thanks to this, "Passage of Death", the labyrinth's monsters have never got to Selbira.

Dohar and I begin to run while calming down my restless mind. I don't want to get mistaken with monster if I carelessly make noise in this passage. It's especially dangerous for Dohar since he's short.

Dohar opens the labyrinth's gate after we finally arrive there. I'm powerless against this heavy gate.

◇

"The kids are going to sweep the goblin's nest, they said."
"I understand."

There are many goblin's nest inside this labyrinth, but they probably went to the so-called fairy area infested with plant monsters, an unpopular area. Ones will have to defeat the troublesome plant monsters, because they act as obstacles, to get to the goblins' location. Plant monsters have high stamina, and they're hard to deal without someone with fire magic in your party. And even if you defeat them, their magic cores are buried deep in the ground, it's not possible to dig out. They're monsters that embody the saying, "Great pains but all in vain." Since it's not worth the effort, the cores are rare to come by as alchemy materials.
Making use of their unpopularity, I made a tunnel straight to that goblin's place using nature art and alchemy to act as an exclusive hunting ground for the young elves.

I've planted Gabo fruits for the goblin's welfare and breeding and eliminated other monsters beside goblins with Dohar.
Now then, I've called them goblins so far, but the ones in this labyrinth are not the wicked fairy goblins but pseudo-goblins that have magic cores inside their body. The wicked fairy goblins have dark green body and bleed red blood, they're fairies who are hated everywhere while the pseudo-goblins can't speak, have dark body and bleed green blood, they're genuine monsters.
The wicked fairy goblins don't exist in this continent for 200 years except in one region, since they are hunted all the same with the pseudo-goblins. Therefore, ironically, what most people refer as goblins are actually pseudo-goblins.

◇

Dohar takes care of monsters who occasionally appear in one blow with his battle axe. He's already working as my attendant for nearly 100 years. He

was overjoyed as he recently had managed to break through level 40, passing his father.

"Boss, it's basilisk."
"I understand. ■■■ Magic Arrow."

I unleash 21 magic arrows toward the basilisk appearing from the back. There are 21 magic arrows, where usually even one is hard to resist. The basilisk becomes pieces of meats without being able to do anything.

"Is it a stray?"
"Yes, basilisks usually appear 5 level below. Some stupid young explorers who overestimated their abilities most likely had gone to the depth and drew one here."
"You're right."

This is troubling. Low level people won't be able to resist Basilisk petrification. The one we encountered just now was just a lower basilisk so it couldn't turn someone into stone, but I don't know if they could take its stare without getting their hearts stopped.

Near the end of the tunnel, we meet a herd of goblins. They're only level 1-3 but it's a herd consisting of around 30 monsters. It's annoying to wait for Dohar defeating them so I provide assistance with magic arrow.

"Boss, for the goblins to appear around this place, that means-"
"Umu."

I briefly answered Dohar's guess. I've scattered medicine that would make goblins think there are strong monsters so they don't go near the tunnel entrance. If they go far past it, then that means the foods don't suffice.

"This is bad."
"Yea, the kids 'ere in danger if we don't get to 'em fast."

The labyrinth monsters periodically enter breeding season. Goblin's period is short, but in exchange their propagation rate rarely change. However their propagation rate is huge, so it can't be helped if there's a calculation error.

...I remember something unpleasant. Last month, Giril mentioned that the reserve Gabo seeds in the storehouse had gone. The storehouse wasn't locked so poor people occasionally stole Gabo fruit from there, so I had just thought, "Again huh", when I heard it.
I've left the job of sowing Gabo seeds here to Houya and the others, but I wonder if they properly follow my order to do it with one small bag? If they sowed the three small-barrels worth of Gabo seeds that were in the storehouse...

I must hurry. If my prediction is true, the goblins may have started breeding explosion. If it really happens then 30 baby goblins could be born by eating the stomach of their mother goblin. And then the children would start breeding again in two weeks. If we're unlucky, we might be facing ten of thousands goblins.

When we finally arrive at an open space, countless bodies of goblins and three dead bodies of the young elves come into our views.

"Regrettable."
"Boss, please save the remorse until we get out of the labyrinth."

I accept Dohar's advice and advance forward.
We smash through the goblins that have clogged up the tunnel. Since we can't avoid the plant monsters, I use nature art <<Enhance Sharp Edge>> on Dohar's battle axe and continue on while he's cutting them.

We finally arrive at a location that could only be called painting from hell littered with corpses as far as eyes can see.
While clearing the goblins corpses with magic and a thin sword, I see the tragic corpses of the young elves full of goblin's teeth marks.

I call the young ones' name several times.

However, no one answers back. Whenever Dohar swings his battle axe, the goblin corpses increase. I deal with three goblins who rush towards me by deploying the <<Floating Wheel>> for my self-protection.
Boom, we hear explosion sounds from the back of the room.

"Dohar."
"Yea, boss."

We act in harmony, making ways through the sea of goblin to the place where the sound comes from.
To back Dohar, I give him reinforcement magic. They're Strength and Dancing Blade.
Strength multiply Dohar's strength several folds allowing him to tear through goblins like a tornado. Dancing Blades is small blades that arbitrarily fly around the target while cutting up enemies with forces. It can be said that Dancing Blades is useless in a labyrinth, but it shows matchless power if the opponents are goblins.

"Houya, Lua."

Lua is smiling weakly hearing my call. Her beautiful transparent green hair has been dirtied with goblins' blood in spots. Still, I'm glad that she's alive. Houya's explosion magic mowed down several dozens of goblins who had tried to crushingly surround them to death. Even so, there are still hundreds of goblins in front of us.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■■■■■■■"

I begin chanting the highest order of nature magic. I've only ever used this when I fought a Lesser Dragon in my life. It's wasteful using this on goblins, but this is the best magic to safely defeat large number of enemies.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■"

What cruelty! Lua has lost her left arm. It could be said that this is a world's loss as her lute playing tones can't be heard anymore.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■ Wild Dancing of Void Spears <<Multiple Javelins>>"

Unseen spears are pouring unto the enemies like downpour. Amidst Dohar who's cutting up the enemies and without injuring Houya and the others, it changes hundreds of goblins into corpses.
I've not only saved Houya and Lua. Beautiful Lua has protected my distant nephew, Yusalatouya, on her back even while losing one of her arm. The

young Yuya is unconscious but I give him an emergency treatment and carry him and Lua together with self-propelled stretcher <<Floating Stretcher>>.

◇

After we've returned, we immediately look for a high-ranking Garleon priest, and ask him to use healing magic. Unfortunately, the recovery for Lua's left arm didn't go well. Until I complete an artificial arm indistinguishable with the real one in the future, Lua must bear through the hardship.

Giril found cold body of Houya on the next day, he most likely felt responsible for the disaster, letting the guilt got into him.

I bring Lua and Yuya back to Bornean forest, taking the blame, two-third of the congress is in agreement to exile me.
Even though I've been away from the forest for a long time, it's sad to be chased away from your hometown. However, the lost of many young people will result in generations without children for dozens, or even hundreds of years. It might be a fitting punishment for someone who has created this racial crisis like me.

As a sole atonement, I will create a pseudo-labyrinth for the sake of elves' growth without the danger like in this disaster. I vow to dedicate my life to build a place for training without the danger of losing lives, for the future of young elves.
I dream of bustling figures of young elves who devote themselves with studying in my maze, someday.
And, I believe in the future where the elves lead the world again.

I am Trazayuya Bornean. One foolish elf man who had scattered the lives of many young lives.

Even so, I cannot abandon my dream.

Intermission: Tama

Wagahai is Tama de Aru[1], the name given by master.

Tama has a family nyan.
A really strong and kind master, and Pochi who's like a little sister and Liza who's like a mother. And also cheeky Arisa and docile Lulu. Everyone is not a cat-person, but they're all important family nyan.

Arisa said that if I use, "Nyan", master will be happy, but it's a lie. Far from being happy, he's worried instead.

"Okay~ Here we go~. Everyone, follow me~."

Arisa is leading the way while running. Today is a shopping day.
New clothes! Fluttering and fluffy, cute clothes with no weird smell.

"If Pochi was to wear this clothes then Tama would be cool with this sharp one I guess?"
"This ribbon is better~?"

Not the one that Arisa recommends, but the matching one with Pochi with a small ribbon attached is what I want.

"Ara? That's unexpected, you like cute things huh~."

I don't know how to use money, so it's Arisa who buys it.

After the shopping is over, we eat a lot and lot of meats with the leftover money. I am very happy.
We pass by a park, I see a nice sunny spot for napping, then I notice master there.

"Master~?"

I run to him to talk, he looks in pain somewhere.
Pochi who runs with me together looks worried too.

"Tummy hurt~?"
"I'm alright, I might be tired though."

Master says so while patting my head. I want to be patted more, I rub my head against master's hand.

◇

The outside! I'm going outside the city for the first time.
Arisa asks, "Didn't you live outside the city when you were small?", but I only remember the winter chill and the warmth of someone's fur.
Alhough I clearly remember the time when I met Pochi, I don't really remember past things.

Pochi wasn't able to speak words and just groaned with, "Gururu~", but I worked hard to teach her words. Since I'm the onee-chan.

The wagon is shaking here and there, it's fun. Since Arisa and Lulu cry their butts hurt, I ask, "Are you okay~?". Arisa screams back, "Nothing is impossible with human's intelligence!", but I don't really understand the meaning. Arisa's words are fun, but I always don't understand them. She's a strange child.

Arisa teaches me many things. [Janken], [Guppa], [Hopping], [Card play], [Anisong], a lot, lots of things.
Next time, if I catch a prey, I'll give it to Arisa.

The scenery is flowing while I'm sitting beside master, it's fun. Pochi also sits beside master on the other side.

"Nya!"

Just now, a prey is in that thicket!
I tried to jump out, but Liza gripped my girdle so I wasn't able to jump out.
Too bad.

The wagon shakes and Arisa complains. Even though wagons are for shaking things, Arisa is really strange.
Pochi counterattacks Arisa who rides on her head. Uu~ I want to join in. But, I'm theonee-chan so I'll endure. Uu~, endure... impossble nyan♪

I play with Pochi and Arisa until Liza stops us.

◇

Uu~, I catch glimpse of many preys.
But, until master has ordered me, endure it, endure.

"Private Pochi! Private Tama!"
"Ay!"
"Yes nanodesu!"

I take on the pose Arisa has taught yesterday, "Swoosh!", and answer master.

"I will assign you two a mission! Check the security around the perimeter of the boulders!"
"Ay!""Desu!"

I chase after a rabbit that I've had my eyes on since earlier with Pochi.

The rabbit is hopping around with, "Pyon pyon"-like sound.
Pochi and me are running together.

It's slower than monsters nyan.

I throw myself.

Pyon pyon.

Nyau, it ran away.
Pyo~n.

Pochi jumps on it.

The rabbit twists its body and slips underneath Pochi.

I won't let you run!

Tou!

But the rabbit dives into a hole hidden in the grass' shadow.
Uu~, if I go there, the clothes given by master will be dirtied.

However, Pochi plunges into the hole without hesitation.
I'm the onee-chan after all, I'll give this rabbit to Pochi.

I catch a snake loitering around under the rock. It's a snake with no poison and delicious.
But, it's a bit small. I look for the next prey while twirling my tail around, and come across Arisa who's looking for firewoods.

"Arisa~?"
"Ara, Tama. Hmm? What are you holding?"
"Snake~"

That's right, let's give it to Arisa.
It's a bit small, but it's good for snacks.

"For you~?"
"Wa, no, don't come here."
"Not poison~?"

Even though it's not a snake with poison, so it's fine.
Now, Arisa, go ahead and chew it from the head without reserve.

"Wa, toss it away."
"Pow~?"
"Yes, turn around. spin and spin~, then throw it with a pow."
"Ay~."

As Arisa says, I spin and spin~ and throw it.

Seems that it's a new play, but I don't understand the fun.

"Yes, that's good."

Arisa crosses her arms and nods with, uh-huh. Seems it was correct.
Arisa pick a firewood on her foot and go back to master.

Next, for the sake of master, I'll look for a bigger prey.

I chase after a dragonfly.

I chase after a cricket.

I found it.

Conceal myself~, tou!

I pin the prey from behind, and it faints just from that.

Weak~?

Even though it's a present for master, but I'm told, "Let it go."
Even though, it's a big prey~.

But, it's an order from master, Tama will listen to what he says.
I spin and spin~ like Arisa taught me and toss it away.

I was scolded by master.

I must tell Arisa that it's bad to lie.
Because I'm the onee-chan.

Intermission: The Work of Manager-san

My name is Yusala Touya, an elf who was born in Bornean forest.

"Manager, the preparation is complete."

The one who calls me is the sole employee of my shop, the small Nadi.
Although she wasn't even as tall as my knee when I first met her, she's grown taller than me before I knew it.
Human grows fast.

"Let's go."

She answers me with an energetic, "Yes!", and carries the big rucksack below her feet on her shoulder.
She presents another medium-sized rucksack below her to me while smiling.
That's my share of luggage huh.

"Laborer."
"We can't. We don't have extra money for that."

I tried to tell her that I wanted to hire a laborer to carry the luggage, but it was rejected. Since she's in charge of the shop's accounting, I can't push it too much.

It can't be helped, I put my favorite staff in the rucksack, and shoulder it.

"I've put manager's favorite dried fig in the bento, so let's do this energetically!"

Hou, it's quite rare for the economical Nadi to look out for others.
My lips gets slightly loose. Since the sharp-sighted Nadi grins when she quickly sees it, I tighten it hard.

◇

"Let's enter the mountain from around this area."

Nadi says so while showing the map to me.
We tie the horses that we rode here on trees. Just in case, I sprinkle medicines to ward monsters around them.

We're in the middle of a job from a merchant boy called Satou to deliver an item for the ashgrey ratkin people who live on an undeveloped land deep in the mountain.
Normally, I wouldn't take such annoying job, but since he's taking care a girl from my race, I couldn't decline it.
Rather than saying I cannot decline, normally I should've taken this job free of charge.
But a good-hearted person he is, he requested the job formally. Moreover, he gave three gold coins
as the payment. I wanted to tell that I didn't need the money, but Nadi quickly blocked my mouth and I was stopped.

"Manager?"
"Sorry."

I lost in thought for a bit.

"Then, please."
"Umu."

I use the secret art for walking in the forest.

"■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■■■ Wood Walk"

Green aura wraps Nadi and me.
It's been awhile since I use this magic.

While we're advancing through the forest in these states, branches and weeds as tall as grown man avert themselves from us.

"This magic is really amazing, no matter how many time I see it."

"Is that so."

I feel slightly embarrassed from Nadi's straight praise.
As a nihilistic grown man, I have to remain expressionless.
I guide Nadi while we continue advancing the mountain path. Since obstacles are avoiding themselves from us, it's no different than walking in a highway.

"Ah, that's the firefly lily of the valley flower!"
"We can't."

Yes, while we're using this magic, we cannot hurt creatures of the forest. Once we do, the magic won't be usable for a season.

"So it's like that, aah, even though we could get five gold coins from the alchemy shop with that flower."

I lead Nadi who keeps staring at the flower in regret by hand, and advance ahead.
I wonder if there was a big monster that passed here, I catch sights of rocks and trees that are gouged unnaturally. Did some kind of high level monster have settled down in this forest?

I was going to use magic to check it, but then I noticed that my hand was still joined with Nadi's. I want to separate our hands, but she doesn't let it go.

"Nadi?"
"Err, there, it's separated."

It's rare for the intelligent her. She's really interested with the flower before is she.
I'm worried with her condition, but I have to confirm the safety first.

"■■■　■■■　■■■■■　■■ Forest Whisper <<Natural Whisper>>"

The magic spreads through the forest.

『Did some new monster spring up in the forest?』

『Yes, a lot.』
『They're no more.』
『No more.』
『Hero.』
『Was here.』
『Night.』
『Running.』
『Flying.』
『Exterminated the great wild boar.』

The forest little echoes continue to echo.
A hero in such remote forest? There should be some rumor if it was the Saga empire hero, but maybe a hero appeared among the ashgrey ratkin? I'm slightly interested with it, but since it doesn't seem to be a monster, there's probably no danger.

◇

We finally arrive at the ratkin settlements in the noon, but unfortunately, looks like we're not really welcomed.

The problem is I don't understand their words. Since I'm told that they saved Mia, I thought that they can speak elf language, but my expectation is off.

"How about it?"
"Yes, it's similar to weaselkin language. There are also some that are similar with elf language."

Nadi is speaking in guess while grabbing the cuff of my clothes.
Although I've heard that she's good with language, to be able to interact using unfamiliar language like this, she's truly capable.

I'd like to use the nature magic [Translate] that my granduncle used but I don't have it, it's impossible with my level.

I watch over Nadi who's negotiating.
In the worst case, we might have to push them the memento at least and go back.

The surrounding ratkin people become slightly noisier. Did Nadi make wrong expressions?
Un?　My feet is being shaken.
When I look down, the ratkin little children are coiling around the luggage that Nadi and me have put on the ground. Since their noses are twitching, are they smelling something good?

I slowly squat down while being careful as to not stimulate the surrounding and open the big rucksack.
Strong smell spread. This bundle have croquettes huh.
Apparently, the children are interested with this smell. I don't know what's so good with this oily thing, but it's also popular in the city.
Nadi probably has brought it for her lunch, but let's use these to build friendship with them.
There are 10 croquettes in the bundle. There are 18 children huh.
I break the croquettes in half, and share it with the children.

When that happen, several ratkins who look like the mothers appear from the gap between the soldiers, and each of them carries 3-4 children who keep on chewing the croquettes to behind the men.
I give the last one to the ratkin who look here so wistfully. I saw a slightly appealing glance from Nadi. I'll divide you the dried fig later, so don't get mad.

I don't know if the croquettes succeed as the go-between, but since a ratkin that seem to be the patriarch who understand Shiga kingdom language comes, the goal is complete somehow.

◇

"I see, so my brother has died."
"According to the person who was present on his last moment, it was a heroic death."

The patriarch says so as he holds the red helmet from among the memento I've handed. I can feel deep sorrow dwelling on his words.
When I was about to say thanks for saving Mia, and farewell, Nadi cuts in.

"Patriarch-san, why is only the forest around here dying?"
"I don't know the reason, but they've begun to wither since half a year ago."

I see, I understand what Nadi is trying to say. It's not enough with just thank you words.
I go out of the patriarch's straw-thatched roof tree house, and use a magic.

"■■ ■……■ ■ ■ ■■■■■ Summon Forest Maiden (Summon Dryad)"

In accordance to my spell, the spirit of this mountain forest responds.
It looks like a little girl with green hair.

"I have something to ask."
"Elf! It's been awhile."
"Mountain forest."
"Do you want to know why the mountain dies?"
"That's right."
"The reason why the mountain die is~ because a human tried to forcibly operate the ruin."

According to the Dryad's story, it looks like it's because granduncle Touya's ruin has absorbed the earth veins around here. How can that be.

"Measures."
"It's alright. The ruin has stopped anyway, and I've taken a lot of mana from a cute child."

Due to the stimulation of that mana, it looks like she's succeeded in drawing power from far away earth veins.
Even though she looks like that, she's lived for a lot longer than me.

"Thank you very much."
"It's fine~, see ya."

The dryad went to the other side of the summoning circle while saying that.
It's already been resolved.

Since I talked with the dryad in elf language, I tell the content of the conversation to the patriarch and Nadi.
I wonder if my story is difficult, Nadi somehow interprets it for the patriarch.

"Oooh, the village is saved."
"I'm glad for you patriarch-san."
"Yes, we won't have to move to a different mountain now."

The patriarch firmly grabs my hand, and says thanks many times over.
Even though I did nothing.

"Isn't it because you use magic to identify the cause, and report that it's fine already right."
"Is that so."

Now then, the job is over.
I want to go back to the city, and take a nap on the usual sofa.

Intermission: Young Merchant and Orphanage Children

When I went to an orphanage on an errand of my employer, I saw little children playing cards. Those cards are exactly like the learning cards that I've made. However, the designs are slightly different.

"Hey, you guys, where did you get those cards?"
"Tsui-niichan made it."
"You're wrong, it was Yuni-ane who got it from her boyfriend."
"Etai-niichan drew the pictures."
"Tsui-niichan shaved the tree you know?"
"Yuni-ane taught us how to play."

The children answered my question in hoots. If you say it like that, I won't be able to hear it. Since the children began to quarrel, I arbitrated them in a hurry.
After asking for many times, I understand that, "They got the cards from the lover of the child called Yuni", "The child called Tsui supplied raw materials like wood blocks, ink, and brushes.", and "The child called Etai drew the pictures."

Since the learning card, including the prototype were bought by that merchant boy, he's probably the lover of that Yuni. The intelligent looking girl who was with her is probably Yuni.
I guess the children that he wanted to teach are this orphanage's kids huh.

That reminds me, the children said something that piqued me.

"What is the way to play?"

There's nothing like way to play for the cards I've made. You read the letter, and check the back of the card to see if you're correct, that's what the item only is.

"Like this!"

"You line them up."
"In turns."
"You guess the letter right~"
"It becomes yours."

The children speaks of in rapid succession. The "I want to tell"-thought overflow. I patiently listen to the children's words, and arrange them in my head.

You put 100 cards with the letter sides on top on the [Field], and if you can read the letter correctly to match the picture on the back, it become yours. The missed cards are sent to the [Graveyard], and if there are no more cards on the [Field], the cards on the [Graveyard] are put back on the [Field], and the play resumes. When the cards are all gone from the [Field], and the [Graveyard], the one who holds the most cards becomes [Scholar]--the winner.

"Amazing, to think of such play."
"That's right, Yuni-ane is amazing~"
"Didn't she say the amazing one was Aisa?"
"You're wrong, it's Tarisa."
"Wasn't it Maisa?"

I want to meet this child called Yuni. I ask if I can meet Yuni or the other two children.

"Yuni-ane is working."
"Tsui-niichan is also training right?"
"What about Etai-niichan?"
"In his room?"
"No, the elder said he was going to work in the field today."
"Gabo field?"
"No, he said mustard spinach."
"Then, he's at the red roof place."
"Uncle, I'll guide you there!"

U, uncle. Even though I'm still 20 years old.
While feeling hurt by the children's words, I follow them by hand.

◇

The children lead me to the place where 20 boys who are about 10 years older than the one who've lead me here are working in the fields.

The eldest-looking muscular boy looks suspiciously at me who've been guided by the children.

"Hey, nice to meet you, I'm a merchant called Neisen."
"What business does Merchant-sama want? Since the crops are the lord-sama's properties, we wont's sell it without permission y'know?"

I notice slightly sarcastic accent from his [Merchant], and [Sama]. I didn't come here to pick a fight with a child.

"It's not like that. I wanted to meet Etai-kun, and these children guided me."
"Etai is under that tree, fainting. Since he's useless, you can take him if you have some business. You kids, come here."

I thank the boy and go toward Etai-kun.
The children are caught by the boy, and got themselves to help weed the grass. While slightly waving to the children, I talk to Etai-kun.

"Etai-kun, can I talk with you for a bit?"
"...Who? Are you?"
"Nice to meet you, I'm a merchant called Neisen."
"Haa, merchant-san, what are you...."

Looks like Etai-kun isn't good with conversations.

"Actually, it's about the picture you've drawn on the learning cards."
"Those are interesting right!"
"Yup, the child who thought that play is amazing."
"Everyone plays it all night."
"Did no one quarrel?"
"Anyone who does will be made to have the last turn."
"I see, that's a good decision. However, it's hard to wait your turns with just

two learning cards sets right."
"No, we have four sets now."

I wasn't able to hide my surprise. It's only been eight days since the [Learning Cards] have been sold. To only take four days to make one set! Even though the painter whom I asked to produce the commercial cards took half a month to create one set...

"Did you draw it yourself?"
"No."

I breath a slight sigh of relief with that words. The reason was because it took several people to shorten the time. However, that thought is negated with the next words.

"I made the first two sets myself, but the other set was made with the help of other kids who were good at drawing. Thanks to that, we made one in a day."

◇

"Theo, Shual, Olio. This person has something to talk about."

Etai-kun leads me to a hut with three boys and girls. I promptly do self-introduction and get down to business.

"Can you guys draw pictures as good as Etai-kun?"
"That's right."
"Not as good as Etai-ani."
"Etai-niichan taught me~"

After each of them draws a picture, I start the talk.

"I want to employ you guys."
"I haven't properly learned the letters you know?"
"Is it my b, body?!"
"My breasts are still small, do you want to make me your mistress?"

I deny the children's off--the-mark replies, and I explain in detail.
I'm the original maker of this learning cards, and I want to spread it all over Shiga kingdom, not only in Seryuu city, so in order to make a lot of the learning cards, I'm going to employ them.

"How much will you give? Will you give one penny for one set?"
"You, that's too greedy."
"That's right, that'll become several copper coins in one month."
"How many will it become?"

The children's wages depend on their works, but the market price is around 1-2 copper coins in a month. In case of living-in, they normally don't get wages.
I tell the children who have begun to count with their fingers the answer.

"If you can make 30 sets in one month, then that'll be 30 pennies, or six coins in copper coins."
"Four of us can make 40 sets."
"Then that'll be eight copper coins. Each person gets two copper coins."
"Amazing, that's about the same as Yuni-neechan."
"It's true, amazing."
"However, do we have that much materials?"
"I wonder if we can ask Tsui-niichan~?"

The children are fast to become excited, and depressed.
I don't intend to make them work that cheap, but since I don't have the fund for the start up, I'll compensate them later for the margin.

"I will prepare the materials of course."
"Really?!"
"Then, I'll make many."
"Un, I'll work hard~"

Among the children who are in high spirit, Etai-kun alone looks gloomy.

"But, is it fine to do it without permissions from Yuni and Tsui-niichan?"
"Oh right, they're the children who have brought the card, taught the play, and suggested the cards' production aren't they."

"Un."
"Do you know where they work at? I'll go and ask them. If I can't meet them, I'll go back at midnight."

I go out of the orphanage after hearing the workplaces of Yuni-chan and Tsui-kun. Since I've acquired informal consents from Etai-kun and the other children, I'll talk about it with the remaining two children. I must respect the fellowship of the children.

◇

First, I go to the Gate Inn where Yuni-chan is working. I have to persuade the girl as she's the one who created the idea of the play. If I just put a separate manual for that play, it'll surely sell.

"Okay."

I got permission from the inn's girl to talk to Yuni during her work, and the she readily replied it. The girl is different than my expectation. She's not that intelligent-looking beautiful girl, but an extremely common girl.

"The one who thought that play isn't me. It's by my friend called Arisa."
"Where should I go to meet her?"
"She's gone to the labyrinth city."
"I see, this is troubling."
"It's alright, that Arisa would say strange things like [There is no border for play] and would give you the permission."

That girl called Arisa seems like she has a hearty personality.

Since that girl has promised to send Yuni-chan a letter when she's arrived at the labyrinth city, I ask her to write this matter for the permission in the reply letter. It's going to be an approval after the fact, but let's work hard as to prevent it becoming a dispute.
Of course I won't be breaking any law even if I use it on my own accord, but to just use other's people idea like that, it's something frowned upon among merchants. Normally, the merchant guild becomes the mediator.

When I tell Yuni-chan that I will send the reply together with her letter, she accept while looking wholeheartedly happy.

◇

Lastly, I go toward the wood processing plant where Tsui-kun is working.
It's directly after the gate on the east street since it's related to woods transport.

"Okay."

I talked to him who's just taken a break, and he answered readily like Yuni-chan.
He replies while playing with the thin shaved wood wastes on his feet.

"It was originally things that Yuni brought anyway, I only got the woods since I wanted one for myself. I'd hate it if you're selling the the cards that are in the orphanage, but if you're selling newly made ones, I don't have any problem. Moreover, you're going to take Etai who's having problem getting works under your care right? It's impossible for that guy to become a soldier or a transporter after all."

He's unexpectedly quite responsible.

"I won't do anything bad to that boy Etai."
"Un, that guy is good at drawing pictures, but if you leave him alone, he'll draw until he collapses."

Tsui-kun nods that he wants me to tell him to be careful.
I should make an upper limit for the number of sets made in a month. If I don't put a limit, those children look like they'll work until they collapse.

When I see the plane and the thin shaved woods that Tsui-kun is holding, I remember certain words.

『What kind of idea are you going to make next? The demands seem to be

there, it's the price afterward. Search for cheap materials, or way for cheap mass-production, the various trial-and-errors are fun right.』

I ruminate those words while staring at the wood chips.

"That's right, this is it."

I involuntarily stand up and shouts, the foremen on this place gather their eyes on me.
However, the excited me with the newly found idea doesn't mind those stares, and go negotiate with the boss-san. The thing that I've thought at this time takes form after half a year.
At this time, I thought of using the plywood made from wood chips and glue as the material for the cards, that wouldn't have happened without the great efforts and experiences of boss-san, and tsui-kun.

Learning cards that are made with latticed wood chips glued to become plywoods are worth 2 silver coins, it becomes souvenirs for people who visit this city for the labyrinth, and becomes well-known.

However, that's a story for later.

Until that, the days of making normal learning cards with wood blocks and barely scrap by to return the cost of the material continue for a while.
At this day, the best I can imagine is the figures of Etai and the others who are flustered for seeing a small bag full of copper coins at the end of the month.

Intermission: Arisa's Master

Are you stupid?
Hey, let me say it once more. Are you stupid?

Reading the atmosphere, I stop those abusive words in my chest.
The object of those words is my [Master]. That powerful enemy is acting presumptuous because he's got that much monstrous power and now, he's challenging that.

You will absolutely lose I said, I know that you have secret unique skills, but your level is only 10, you know?
No matter how great your skills are, there's no way it could overcome 4 times level difference!

Moreover, he's hiding his skills even though his level is so low. I wouldn't know what kind of secret technique you've prepared!

"I won't hesitate to turn this into a bloodbath you know?"

The monster says so while pointing his cane to my master.

"It's no good! Master, this guy is too strong."
"Trashes don't have any place to call me 'this guy'."

Yes, I'm doing my best to call for [master's] attention, but the attack is coming here. Ah, this life is going to be over here huh. I want to flirt before I die~.

◇

I still remember the day I meet him.
I was in the shaking slave carriage that had just arrived in Seryuu city. It

was depressing only looking at the gloomy slaves in the carriage.
At that time, I felt a gaze from somewhere, and he was there.

Black hair.

Black pupils.

Delicate build.

And, Japanese face.

Yes, [Love], it had been a long time since I saw my right-in-the-center type after seeing only macho in this world.
Particularly, the slightly unreliable easy-to-push-round look is nice. My creative impulse is welling up. My delusional power cannot be stopped, like that.
You seem to be wearing good clothes, why don't you buy me and Lulu.

I deliberately attempted to use chantless charm magic, but the carriage went to the road's corner.

◇

To protect me, [Master] charges toward the monster.

What, what's with that speed!
I thought he had just started to step forward, but he had already slipped into the monster's bosom, driving a blow.
I've seen my country's knight leader and hero having a bout before, he's faster than the hero's rush at that time. Yup, too fast.

But, the monster shrugs off that attack like it's a breeze. The monster completes its chant just like that, and flings the appearing shadow whips towards me.

I hope it's not instant death.

While thinking that, as my last resistance, I chantlessly fire Psycho Bullet toward the shadow whip, but it doesn't work well.
I wonder why did I read the book about mind magic when I was in the castle. If it was light or fire magic, I could retaliate this monster.

However, the shadow whip doesn't reach me. My [master] moves as if he's teleporting and receives the attack with his body.
Even though he's delicate, his back looks slightly wide, and relief surfaces along with anger in me.

Why are you acting so rash!

◇

The next time I met him was several days after. I remember the surrounding was noisy because the missing slave trader had came back.

Since a good customer is here, the expensive girls that would likely sells were to be shown in turns. Apparently the opponent was quite formidable, 10 girls had dejectedly returned.
And then, it's our turn, the six unpopular ones. If the girls before weren't selling, there's no way we would, curse.

And the one who's sitting in the sofa inside the tent is him. He's with three beast kin girls behind. Alright, I'll get his favor!

Nidoren, the slave trader, is saying something, but right now I'm putting power to my eyes!

But, the appeal from this beauty doesn't reach him, he almost leaves from the place. I become panicked and try to appeal with words. Fufufu, receive this appeal attack from me who's accustomed with job-hunting!

However, he's tough.
Even after I explain the merit and convey my feeling, he's completely unwavering.
Can't be helped, I'll use my last resort. I won't let this chance pass, even if it

means I have to use heartless means!

Get shaken with chantless, [Charm Person], and [Fret].

Huh~?　It's not working.

The magic finally works after I use my trump card, Never Give up.
Who is this person?
His name is Satou, and his face looks Japanese, he must be a transported person right?

Well, let's be happy with this for now.
Fuffuffu, I won't let you sleep tonight.

◇

Something that looks like a joke is happening in front of my eyes.
Is he really a human? He grasp the supposedly untouchable magic restraints with his hands and tries to do something about it.

"It's hard to grasp even though it doesn't have reaction, this stupid <<fantasy>> things."

He really get away from the restraint even while complaining.
No no, you can't normally do that.

"What is your purpose?"

Mou, forget about purpose.
First of all, we should get away from here in order to live.

It's too bad, but let's give up on Mia.
Mia, I'm sorry. You can resent me however much. I'm helpless with my power.

"Do you have grudges with heroes?"
"Way off the mark."

The discussion breaks off, a lot of shadow whips are coming from under the monster's feet and go towards Mia.
He takes out two handguns from his pocket and shoots down the shadow whips.

Oh!　Cool~
Why doesn't this world have digital camera!

I'm having an out-of-place thought to escape from the stress from this hopeless situation.

◇

I've played a petty trick during our contract ceremony. I've mixed, [You can approach me day and night.] With this, as long as master doesn't seriously order against it, it won't be considered a violation of contract.

I'm clever~♪　Arisa-chan great victory.

On the way back to the inn, interesting things keep piling up.

Itadakimasu?

Protein?

This person really is Satou-san huh?

Let's put aside such trivial things.

No matter what happen, tonight is my first night!
I haven't had first night in my previous life!
I'll fully demonstrate you my net knowledge, boy!

I enter the inn room while feeling excited.

We're in the same room.

I understand, boy. A 15 years old is at his peak of wanting it!

"Arisa and Lulu, you two can use that bed."

Does he want to attack us as set?
Lulu is pure, if possible, I want her to have normal loving one.

I was waiting for his attack, 'is it now', 'or now', but he was sleeping on the next bed.

IM-POS-SI-BLE!

I put Lulu to sleep with mind magic and crawl into master's bed.
I feel sorry, but I don't have any regret.

The result was utter failure, but turned out he really is a Japanese.
I don't know if he's a reincarnated or transported, but with that Japanese face, he's probably a transported one. Can't be sure with Lulu here though.

◇

"Arisa! When morning comes, go ask for assistance at the worker's guild manager."

Uwaah~, stupid stupid stupid.
I frantically jump to him who is sinking together with Mia into shadow portal.

But, I didn't reach him.
The shadows that come out slip and graze me.

"Arisa, let's take care of those for now."

Liza plunges toward three shadow stalkers alone.
Doing such reckless attack, even the usually calm Liza is greatly shaken.

While I fight the shadow stalkers with chantless shock wave, Pochi, Tama

and Liza are supporting me.

Liza got hurt, but we somehow won.
I give Liza first-aid with the help of my previous life's memory, while Pochi and Tama are preparing the wagon.

I wanted to have Lulu to drive the wagon, but since she can't see well in the darkness, it'd be dangerous so I leave it to Liza and Tama.

"Master is alright nanodesu?"
"Come back~?"

I want to know that too!
But, as an adult woman I can't possibly slap nervous little girls.

"Of course, he' s alright. He's our master remember. Of course he's coming back!"

I declare so while convincing myself midway.
I won't ask him to be in one piece, but at least please come back alive!

◇

When we're waiting for the gate of Seryuu city to open, Tama begins making noise.

"Re~?"
"What's wrong nodesu."
"Master, there~!"

What did you say!

"Is that true, Tama!"

I press toward Tama.
Whoops, the wagon suddenly moves and I fall down.
Although she wasn't complaining before, Liza's eyes are looking very

desperate.
This girl might be unexpectedly the most worried.

"He's there desu!"
"Sama~."
"Yeah, master. ...He's safe.

Pochi, and Tama, then Liza who has became emotional is choking her words.
Hey wait, where is he?

"Arisa, there. At hill on the road ahead, in white clothes."

He's there!
What are you doing so nonchalantly waving here.

"...I, I was worried! Mou, promise me to never do something that absurd ever again!!"

I shout and cry on his chest.
He's apologizing so many, many times, but he absolutely doesn't understand.

I will become strong.
To protect this stupid and reckless [Master] from jumping into dangerous situation!

I am Arisa.
Former Japanese, Tachibana Arisha
My love story won't lose to this absurd parallel world (fantasy)!

Death March

- Volume 6 -

6-1. I Want to Practice Magic [Failure Arc]

Satou's here. My karaoke points has never been higher than 60. Yearning for that thing called absolute pitch, Satou's.

◇

I'm hearing singing birds signaling morning.
Opening my eyes, I see faint light from the cloth roof. It's a bit dazzling.
Ah right, I slept in the wagon because the camping ground was wasteland covered with stones yesterday.

While lying down I look down to my chest, and see a hand grasping my shirt loose. I look to the side, a beautiful black-haired girl is sleeping there while hugging my left hand.
I've gotten quite accustomed to it but it makes my heart jump for a bit. If there's no age difference between us, I wouldn't be able to retain my reason.
Next I turn my view toward the opposite side.
There, a girl whose head is being pressed by two gigantic pair of hills is sleeping with unpleasant expression, and the owner of the hills herself is hugging my arm while having innocent sleeping expression on her truly beautiful face.

Since it'd be too bad to wake everyone up, I doze off while enjoying the soft and nice fragrance of women.
I peek at the wide neckline of Nana's pajamas, locking on soft-looking valley is a man's nature. Since I use all my might to suppress the natural phenomenon that happens to man every morning, I'd like you to forgive me doing this much.

"Master, the breakfast preparation is about to complete, so please get up."

Liza who had been on guard duty for until dawn comes to wake me up. Her voice sounds a bit flat, it must be my imagination.

I almost say, "I'm sorry", out of guilt, but somehow I reply back with a good morning.

Lulu and Mia are waking up after hearing the voice.
Lulu is saying good morning while shyly fixes her hair and clothes, and Mia shortly says, "Morning" in a small voice while cruelly shoving Nana who had been hugging her aside.
After greeting Lulu, I hand out a white apron to Liza out of the wagon. Nana doesn't seem like she'll wake up even after getting cruelly shoved.

When I look at my feet, Arisa is asleep while grabbing the cuff of my trousers and on top of her, Pochi and Tama are sleeping while looking like they're holding her down.
I can somehow imagine what happened. Arisa was going to do yobai and tried to move Pochi and Tama out of the way, they counterattacked and they were exhausted halfway through. And then Lulu gained profit from all of these.

Hearing rustling clothes, I turn toward it, and Mia is there with her clothes already taken off.

"Wipe me."

Mia gives me towel and makes me wipe her back. It seems that she's sweaty because Nana hugged her all night.
After being saved from the magician, Mia sometimes becomes dependent like this.
It's not like she's fallen for me, it feels more like a sibling love.

"Mia, don't thoughtlessly undress yourself in front of an opposite sex."
"N."

She's answering briefly while nodding, does she really understand?
Her character would probably get mended when she's old enough even if I leave her alone, so I won't fuss over it too much. It's fine just to remind her occasionally.

Since I've finished wiping her back, I'm giving the towel to Mia. Mia reverses her direction and spread her arms wide assuming, 'wipe me', posture.

She's wearing an underwear of course, but only her long hair covers her upper body.

"Here too."
"Mia, wipe the front yourself."
"...Satou."
"I won't do it even if you act spoiled."

She demands with upturned eyes, but more than this is dangerous. Even if she's flat, I'm afraid that I'd caught little girl preference (curse).
Mia reluctantly receives the towel and begins to wipe her front.
Since it feels indecent if I look at it too much, I wake Nana and the girls up and get out of the wagon.

◇

The outside of the wagon smells of blood---

On a tree near where Liza is cooking, there are 5 animal bodies hung on a rope in order to drain their bloods.
The AR indicates that it's [Brown Wolf Meat]. Come to think of it, they were eliminated by Pochi and Tama at midnight. Since there were just 10 low leveled animals, I just watched over them on the radar. So half of it became, "Meat", huh.

Looking at this state, it means that the breakfast is going to be meat. I do like meat, but I'd love if it's not that from the morning.

"It's going to be done soon, so please drink this for now."

Lulu says so while serving me tea.
Since she's only wearing a simple apron over her pajamas, her body lines visible under the morning light before my eyes, I'm a bit troubled to where I look.

"We have prepared vegetable soup and breads for master and Mia, so please don't worry."

"Thank you, I appreciate it."

If I leave it to Liza alone, it'd certainly become a meat fest, so I'm happy with Lulu's concern.
Mia has somehow quietly sat down beside me before I was aware, snatches the cup from my hand and drinks the tea.

There are usually three little girls scrambling around me, but it's different in the morning. They're going to Liza's, asking to help while tasting this and that, and getting scolded. It reminds me of the nostalgic time when I was a hungry child.

"Master, 'ning."
"Good morning Nana. Morning greeting is [Good morning] you know. Forget strange things Arisa taught you."
"Yes, my lord."

I look up Nana who answered while saluting. Seen this close, her face is hidden by her breasts looked up. Truly a splendid view.
While I'm correcting the strange words that Arisa taught her, we sit on the sheet.
Since the clothes that she wore looked like what a cheap courtesan would wear, right now she's wearing Liza's reserve clothes. At first I wanted to lend her my robe but for some reason Arisa was strongly against it and Lulu also weakly opposed it, so it was rejected.

On the large platter are wolf intestines with fried vegetables and boiled potatoes, vegetable soup for breakfast it is today. There are cut bread and fruits made for me and Mia.

With Liza's instruction, the three little girls are quickly distributing plates and tablewares. Of course they also don't forget to encamp near the platter with meat.
The battle begins after everyone had sit down and said, "Itadakimasu". With Liza as the chief, Pochi, Tama and Arisa aim at the meat platter. Although it has fried vegetables, around 70% of it is meat, and it's disappearing fast. Around 3-4 kilos of meat are eaten up in a blink of eyes, it feels like watching a fast forwarded video.
On the other hand, Lulu is putting meat together with vegetable on her

mouth in good manner. She's eating calmly, but her hands aren't stopping so her appetite is probably plentiful enough.

It's nice to be young~. They could eat so much meat since morning. I feel like having heartburn even just by looking at it.

Nana drinks water while watching them.
I'll say this beforehand, this isn't a bullying.

It's said that for approximately half a year after her birth, she can only receive water and magic power. Since the same things is also written in the alchemy book left behind by Trazayuya-shi, it's probably true.

There three ways to supply magic to Nana.

The first is by using a facility called Regulation Tank. When she was with Zen the magician, she used this method.

The second is by doing naughty thing with a man. The so-called bed technique. Frankly speaking, it's sexual intercourse. I was fine with this method, but Lulu suddenly cried, "I'm first!", so I stopped. Her crimson red figure afterwards was quite cute. Of course, Arisa also objected but since it was completely overshadowed by Lulu's impact, there isn't any impression left. It seems that it was a verbal slip, she couldn't look me in the eyes for 2 days after that.

The third and the last is by placing hands near her heart and pouring magic power to her heart which operates like a magic tool. To have a justified reason to touch that splendid hills, I have no complaint--- but, when I'm about to do it, Mia blocks it with a single word.

"Back."

Yes, as long as it's near the heart, it's fine to do it from the back.
Well fine, I'm still enjoying her fascinating nape and the lines of her bare shoulders from the back. Just once, yes, just once is enough, let me do something as I please.

◇

After the meal, I'm supplying magic power to Nana who has her back exposed.
When I strengthen the magic supply, she react ticklishly, it's interesting.
Although, Arisa and the girls are staring here like they're monitoring, so I can't play around. Even though the charming voice of a beautiful woman would warmth my heart, this is too bad.

"Are you going to practice again today?"
"Of course."

Let me say this, it's just a magic practice. It's nothing that would make me feel guilty.
Not only me, Pochi and Tama are also holding short canes. They wanted to imitate me when they see me practicing magic, so I lent them the canes.

"Then I'll give you an example. I will only do it once, so watch it well."

Arisa with a long cane faces toward where there's no one and starts to chant.

"■■■ Breeze"

After the chant is complete, gentle winds shake the weeds.

"Uuu, my head hurts. The burden of using magic without the skill is big after all. It might be using five times more magic power even."

I thank Arisa and begin to chant the magic.
It's a magic with the shortest chant among the life magic and high success rate.

"■▼▲ Breeze"

Like usual, I failed.

"Not good, it's not good at all. Only the first node of the beginning was right.

Moreover the rhythm was strange."

Rhythm huh, I'm not confident with that.
First let's do something about the fumble.

"Nyrurireato saru mina ra me ra to oi yoi oi wan"
"Nyururiareto saru ra mina metora oi yoi io nyan"

Pochi and Tama facing each other, are reciting random chants while waving the canes around like dancing.
Of course it doesn't work, but I won't say anything unnecessary since the two looks really happy.

"■◆▲ Breeze"
"■▲◆ Breeze"
"▲▲◆ Breeze"
"No good, it's getting weirder."

I tried for so many times but Arisa keep disapproving it.

"Let's change the approach."
"Like how?"
"Let's see, do it calmly, first why don't you make sure that you get the pronunciation right?"

That reminds me, I've bought books about reciting and pronunciation too.
While reading the book, the practice begins.

When I start practicing tongue-twister, Arisa who was looking at Pochi and Tama's dance interjects.

"Try saying 'kami anime' 5 times fast."
"Kami anime, kami amime, kami ami i, I can't."
<TLN: Kami anime means godly anime, yeah this TLN seems redundant but "godly anime" doesn't sound as tongue-twisting.>

What the heck is this. It's difficult.

"Next is, try to pronounce the vowels, 『a』 and 『i』 clearly."

Fumu, I think I had heard the same thing from seiyuu who act as BGM from the net radio when I was on break in the rest area during my job.

Let's try this.

"Slowly okay."
"Kami anime, kami anime, kami anime, kami anime, kami amime."
"Too bad, only the last one was out, once more! Come, stand up, if you're like that then the lowest seat of celestial maiden is but a dream!"

Arisa is hiding half her face with hair while saying that.
For now, let's challenge it once again.

"Kami anime, kami anime, kami anime, kami anime, kami anime."

>[Tongue-twister Skill Acquired]
>[Smooth Talking Skill Acquired]

Alright, I max out the point for both and activate them.
The me now is able to utter any kind of tongue-twister.

"■◆◆ Breeze"

...I failed.

"You didn't bite your tongue, but your rhythm is wrong."

I tried to practice with Arisa's help for many times, but the chanting never succeed. I have no sense of pitch. I wonder how often did I bicker with sound creators for not recognizing the sound difference during bug report...

Liza is calling since the preparation for departure is complete, so I finish the magic practice.

Unfortunately I can't practice on the wagon.
I almost bite my tongue, and my voice vibrates from the shaking, so practice isn't possible.
I make a promise in my heart to do my best tomorrow, and go on the

coachman stand.
I pat Pochi and Tama's head who positioned themselves on both sides of me and depart the wagon.

6-2. Let's Train

Satou's here. Some people said that making cakes are like doing chemistry experiment.
I think that's a big fat lie, I think people who make confectionery have had good tastes from the beginning.

◇

Now then, for several days in this trip, let's activate numerous skills. I wouldn't use up half of my points even if I maximize out all the skills that I've obtained, but since skill like [Appraisal] encompass several other skills in function, I'll exclude skills with questionable or redundant effect.

First, I had wanted to level up Weapon skills, but I already acquired enough skills needed for close combat, so I'll put the other weapon skills to reserve. For once, since I've read useful appliance for Dagger skill from many history and tales, I activate it.

I enable almost all Physical combat-related skills. Since the demerit from [Reckless Courage] skill seems to be high, I leave it inactive. I don't know the usability of Shield Bash so I only level it up to 5. If it's useful then I'll maximize it.

Tactic skills are another ones where I don't feel the actual effects, but I activate them all following Arisa's advise.
I'm told that if I combine commands and cooperations together, the party members could then use combo techniques. Seems that this is an information from the hero yet Arisa herself doesn't know how to concretely do it, oioi you have to verify that.
Although she says, "When we level up in the labyrinth, we'll learn it.", when I consult to her, it doesn't seem like they'll be able to do it right away.

I've already activated most physical-related skills already so I just activate the remaining, Herculean Strength skill.

Although I'm already strong enough to play with a lump of iron like it's clay, so I don't feel stronger. Let's just believe that it'll make a difference when I fight a solid enemy.

The Magic skills branch underwent no change at all. There's no meaning to it until I can successfully chant.

I also think that Resistance skills have subtle effects, but I activate them just to be safe. However, I only level up [Fear Resistance] skill to level 3. This is only a hunch, but I feel that I shouldn't maximize it. It has the same kind of smell as [Reckless Courage] skill.

I level up Production skills, [Carpenter], [Leather Craft],[Weapon Creation], and [Blacksmith] to level 4. Leaving me better than the averages, but not quite an expert. Since I'm scared if I was to drink half-finished medicines, I raise the related skill to the maximum. With these levels of skills, it should be enough for repairing or making things in daily life.

I level up Science skills, [Experiment], [Appraisal] and [Education] to the max,、and [Demon Language], [Ash Rat Tribe Language] and [Green Scales Tribe Language] to level 1, beside those I don't make any other change since they look subtle.

I don't do anything with art-related skills. Confirming it with Arisa, singing skill doesn't have anything to do with rhythm. It seems to be a skill that would make people deeply moved with the thing you're conveying with your singing. I can't understand that at all, but even if I argue I can't refute it.
I can't succeed with the chanting anyway, since I have nothing to lose, maybe I should try raising it?

I level up Commerce-related skills, [Poker Face], [Persuasion], [Bribing], and [Lip Service] to level 5-- expert levels.
I didn't have the chance to use [Bribing] skill in Seryuu city, but according to the travel journal I've bought, there are a lot of people who need bribes for smoothening things up at the towns ahead. That's troubling.

Labor skills are mostly unchanged. I maximize [Surveillance] and [Capture] skills, but only leave [Marshalling] skill to level 5.

For labyrinth skills, [Item Box] is unchanged, while [Trap Usage] get to level 5, but I raise all other skill to the maximum.
In this world, I don't think that I'd be unrelated to labyrinth after all.

The most troubling ones are Specialty skills. Skills that are certain to be useful like [Lip Reading] and [Straining One's Ear] are raised to the maximum, but I'm wondering whether to activate stuffs that are too dark like [Behind the Scene], or [Assassination], and decide to activate the ones that looks usable for scouting and fighting. I was at loss for a moment, but I decided to put aside, [Conspiracy], [Condemnation] and [False Charge].
Of course I leave the Night Time skills alone. It's no good to cheat there right?

Even after allocating this many, I haven't even use 30% of my skill points. Since I'll need considerably more points when I can use magic, it's fine not to force myself to use skills like [Mowing] or [Transporting].

I also try to appraise the two unusable unique skills, but they're unknown like always. I'd like to have tutorial or help functions. Even though it was available in the original menu screen.

◇

After I've completed my skill activation work, what I should think next is how to learn skills that my companions have.

The skills they have that I don't are [Etiquette], [Thrusting], [Dismantling], [Heavy Blow], [Enemy Search], [Cooking], [Collecting], [Nature Art], and [Spirit Vision].

Among them, the [Nature Art] seems to be the same thing as Arisa's unique skill so even if I'm attacked by that technique, I won't learn it. According to the books left behind by Trazayuya-shi, Homonculus have organs that enable them to use nature arts. It's probably something like a race-specific skill.

Mia's [Spirit Vision] seems to allow her to see spirit, but I can't even imagine how to acquire it so I give up on it. Of course, I asked Mia about it, but I only got these, "I can see it you know?", "You can't?", "Why?", kinds of answers. Let's ask from some adult elves on Bornean forest.

The skill that I need to learn most is probably [Enemy Search]. The map and radar are excellent for searching vast area and specific enemies, but they're not good for fuzzy ones. Even after setting it to look for the familiar like the other day, that kind of threat was still easily escaped from it.

The runner-up should be [Thrusting], and Heavy Blow]. Seems they would increase my attack power in combat.
The remaining ones are [Collecting], [Dismantling], [Cooking], but I don't need them with Liza and the others here. I feel that I don't have particular need for [Etiquette] skill, but looks like it could be used together with [Education] skill so let's plan to acquire it for now.

◇

I decide to learn [Dismantling] and [Cooking] from Liza on the next rest.

I've wanted to learn [Thrusting] and [Heavy Blow] first, but there's no enemy to fight. If I was to practice with Liza, I'm afraid that I would hurt her. Although she could be healed with medicine and Mia's magic, I still feel reluctant. I am also not able to learn the skill that I want most, [Enemy Search], since there is no enemy.

By the way, the wagon is about to leave Seryuu's earl territory and entering the neighboring earl's territory since yesterday. There are a lot of basins in this territory. Right now, the wagon is advancing on one such basin.
There are monsters in this territory, but there is absolutely none along the road, they only occasionally appear deep in the mountain. On the other hand, there are a lot of wolves' packs and hibernating bears. Since there seems to be a lot of beasts in the vicinity we are going tomorrow, I decide to have the combat training there.

Now then, let's put aside the planning for now and begin the dismantling.

Of course there's a reason why I want to learn dismantling now. It's because we've bought fish from the children on a village located near a river we've crossed earlier.
The hurdle of doing it with mammals are too high so when we got the fish I thought that it was a good chance to learn it. Since I've dissected fish before, it's probably going to be alright.

Sharp is better than dull. Thinking so, I take out a magic tool from the storage to use. [Troll Slayer], beside the attached property, it's a dagger without anything special except that it cuts well. Of course it cannot be compared to normal dagger although not to the degree of holy swords. It's carved with [RAZ] signature, I wonder if it's an inscription?

Following Liza's instruction, I cut through the fish without any resistance. I was able to cut it into 3 pieces in an instant.
After that, when I throw away the fish's intestines and head, the quite serious Liza scolds me.

>[Cooking Skill Acquired]
>[Dismantling Skill Acquired]
>[Dissection Skill Acquired]

I allocate points to maximum for dismantling and cooking skills and activate them. Since it's fish, let's grill them with salt and miso.

Since I don't have grill mesh or something alike in my Storage, I reluctantly use skewers made from trees and grill them with bonfire. When they begin to change color, I spread miso on it.
Everyone beside Mia and Nana are staring at me intently, so right when the grilled fish are done I distribute it to them.

"Yummy~""Delicious, nodesu."
"Delicious... It's been awhile since I've had fish, but this is more delicious than the one from my hometown by far."
"It's really delicious desu."
"DE-LI-SH~! rather, what's this, what's this, way too tasty."

They're quite popular.

Mia looks curious with them so I offer her a bite, but she says, "...don't want." with a slightly frustrated voice. Nana looks at me while looking like she really want to eat it, but I can't let her do that, so I endure it. Since her eyes have become teary, I'll fix her mood by dripping several drops of fruit juice for her cooled water.

I also eat it, but it's really too delicious.
I don't actually like river fish, but the flavor is the best. The savoriness overflows or rather, the oil enhances the taste of the white meat just right. I didn't think that the effect of level 10 cooking would be this much. I lament at the fact that there's no cooked rice. I do have 3 liters of rice, but I'm not sure how to heat it. I feel like I could make the best rice porridge, but I feel like I couldn't heat it right at all to make it fluffy.

Next I try sampling the taste of the fish with miso.
...It's tasty, but there's something different. It feels like there's something missing.
The miso fish is well received by everyone, but Arisa has the same impression as me.

"It's really delicious, but unlike the salted fish, there's something not right."

Even if your cooking skill level is high, it's no good if you don't know the recipe huh. I know somehow that the amount and method are perfect, and the miso usage is probably not wrong. I had wanted to make Sawara Miso Grill, but since I wasn't cooking much in the previous world, it might had been reckless of me.
I ask Arisa what I should do, but she says, "I know the taste isn't right, but I completely don't know how to do it right." with her hands on her hips while acting bossy in despair, is she feeling guilty or something?

Among the books that I've bought from the bookstore, there's no cooking books. I've completely overlooked it. Let's look for it in the next town.

◇

After dinner at the same day, I have Liza demonstrates [Thrusting] and

[Heavy Blow]. I forwarded the plan because I saw a large beast approaching our camp site not so far away.

"Then, I will do a normal stab, a thrust, and a heavy blow in turns."

Liza says so, sets up a black spear and stabs three times with it. With beautiful stance, she's stabbing the spear more powerfully compared to some average territorial soldiers. I hear the sound of tearing air accompanying each stab. I don't quite understand the difference between the first two stabs, but the last one is clearly different.

Like a bowstring pulled to the limit, she twists her body back and then strongly lunge the spear forward. A single blow that reverberates with the whole body. It's similar to her single blow that pierced through the rhinoceros beetle monster in the labyrinth back then, but it's more polished by far.

Hmm? What was that just now.

"Liza, I'm sorry, but please do the last blow once again."
"Yes!"

She puts the stance like earlier and does the blow that shakes the ground. There really is a red trace-line coming out from her spear for an instant. Checking Liza's stat, not only her stamina has decreased, but her magic power too. It might be an additional effect of [Heavy Blow].

I decide to borrow Liza's spear and try to test it myself.

First let's warm up while using it normally.
Unfortunately, I don't produce powerful sounds like Liza does. It's probably because I'm being careful as not to gouge the ground, but it's lonely to not even make "Gou" or "Shun" sounds.

"Truly splendid stabs."

Liza is praising me, but since they're just stabs without power, I'm embarrassed with the excessive praise.
Next, I try to imitate thrusting. Something's not right.

"Master, please excuse me for a bit."

Is she unable to watch me twisting my wrist several times, Liza hugs me from behind and grasps the spear while explaining.

"To do thrusting, when master stab the spear, master has to half-rotate your wrist for an instant. Loosen master's hand for a moment and then grasp it tightly when master stabs. I will show it slowly, please feel the movement of my fingers and wrist."

Liza puts her hand on top of my hand and demonstrates the timing.
I see, this is something that's hard to transmit with just words.

Liza separates from me and I begin to do as demonstrated.
Yes, this is it.

"As expected of master for mastering the secret just by doing it once."
"It's because Liza is good at teaching."

The fact that Liza's teaching is good is the truth, but I could learn it just by doing once is unmistakably because of the spear skill level 10.
I do it several times until I memorize the feeling.
Still, even though I've become able to use it, I don't seem to get the skill. So it's true that in order to learn weapon skills I have to use it against an enemy.

The same thing happens with heavy blow. It goes without saying that I am not able to get the skill.
I wonder if it's because I don't have the skill, even though I can imitate heavy blow, my magic power isn't decreasing.

I want to quickly learn the skill and let out that red shines.
The blue light from holy swords is good, but I think that the red light really suits Liza.

6-3. Strengthening

Satou's here. There are a lot of RPG where you can create things nowadays.
If you fail, the materials disappear.

◇

On evening of that day, the "Guest" has came relatively close by as expected, so I get up off the bed and go to the place where Mia and Tama are doing night watch.

"Change?"
"Too early~?"
"The change is still a bit later."

I ask Tama to teach me the way to do [Enemy Search].

"Nyu~?"

She folds her short arms while looking troubled looking cute. I want to poke at the wrinkle on her forehead.

"Lots of sound, different sound."
"Same view, different color."
"Nice smell, normal smell, bad smell."
"Lots of sameness, lots of differences."
"So, you understand~?"

I listen attentively to her who's trying hard to convey.
The point is to detect the finer differences from numerous information.
"Don't think, feel.", like that?

"I'll go inside the forest for a bit to try it. I'll raise my voice if anything happen, if you hear it then wake Liza up for help."

I tell the two so and make my way through the forest.
I've thought they would follow but it seems they're too sleepy for it.
I'm borrowing Liza's spear since I intend to acquire heavy blow skill when I

come into the contact with the enemy. I've properly ask for permission before she went to sleep.

I've said to Tama that I would only go for a bit but the place is actually 3 kilometers away. It's around several hundred meters away from the enemy's location.

Basing from experience, I turn off all sort of indications OFF from the menu. Next, I relax my body and sharpen my sense while musing over Tama's word.

While half-closing my eyes, I extend my focus.

Moonlight shines through the sparse shades. Ivies and bushes. Silhouette of sleeping birds at branches. Glowing eyes of small animals. Catching glimpse of a black shadow from the gaps between trees far away.

I listen carefully.

Lots of sounds. The sound of trees swaying from the winds. The sound of grasses stepped by small animals. Insects' sounds. The sound of claws of something hitting the hard ground.

I imagine every inch of my body uniting with nature.

The smell of grasses. The smell of soil. The faint smell of water. A different kind of creature's smell like paint dropped on a river.

My sense becomes quietly serene--

Kasa.

Ton.

Hyun.

I move my body matching the change on the flow of atmosphere. I had avoided something that attacked from a blind spot.

After avoiding it, I turn my consciousness toward the culprit, there's a black panther that has just landed slightly further away. That guy doesn't seem to think much of the failed surprise attack and gracefully turns toward me.

I make only the log be displayed.

>[Enemy Search Skill Acquired]
>[Danger Sensing Skill Acquired]
>[Space Grasp Skill Acquired]
>[Mind's Eye Skill Acquired]

I activate the abundance of new skills.
During that time, the black panther is attacking many times but since I can see it, avoiding isn't a problem.

I know that there's another one up on the tree, maybe it's thanks to enemy search skill.
Is it aiming for when I've became tired?

It's hard to use spear for close combat inside the woods but I could figure out the right angles thanks to space grasp skill and freely move as I imagine.
I prepare the heavy blow stance I've practiced this evening, and simultaneously drive heavy blow and thrusting to one of the animal. The quiet blow goes through the black panther's head without resistance.

>[Thrusting Skill Acquired]
>[Heavy Blow Skill Acquired]
>[Penetration Skill Acquired]

Matching the timing with my attack, the panther on the tree assaults me, I evade the danger as if I could see it.
I quickly activate the three new skills, and prepare to hit the panther that has just landed.
Since Liza seems to use magic when she demonstrates heavy blow, I try to put magic power into the spear.

The spear lets out red trace of light when it's feed with magic power.
Quite beautiful.

The spear pierces through the panther while drawing red track of light.
Immediately after the red light appears, I rotate my wrist in reverse rotation converging the spear tip on the panther, the panther's upper half and the tree behind it burst into small pieces.
It was good to do this away from the camp. I had almost disturbed everyone's sleep.

>[Magic Edge Skill Acquired]
>[Spiral Spear Attack Skill Acquired]

I didn't think there would be other techniques that could make red light appear like with Liza's technique. But I've acquired useful-looking skills so it's for the best. Of course, I also activate these two skills. The names are kinda chuunibyou-ish, but let's turn a blind eye on that.

◇

Since I've accidentally come into a wide open space suitable for practice, I decide to practice magic edge. The light seems to be different depending on the amount of magic power you put into.

I try putting 1 MP. Subtle light lines appear on the spear.
I try putting 10 MP. Clear red light lines appear on the spear.
I try putting 50 MP. Strong red light line repeatedly appear on the spear. This is usable for illumination.
I try putting 200 MP. Intense red light-- this is bad, the spear is vibrating strangely.

I have a feeling that the spear will explode if this is left alone.
Liza's sorrowful face flashes in my mind.

This is bad.

That's right.
If there's too much, then I can just absorb it.

The moment after I thought that, I extract the magic power on the spear by

imagining absorption-- good, the vibration has stopped.

Fuh, I was flustered.
Let's experiment with black steel spear or something next time.

Even though I've absorbed the magic, Liza's spear retain its red light or rather, it has become a pattern. Can't be helped, when the morning comes, I'll apologize to Liza by doing dogeza.

I hope that at least it doesn't get weaker...

Confirming with the AR, the spear's name has became, [Magic Spear Douma]. If I'm not mistaken it was [Black Spear of Cricket] back then. I don't remember its exact offensive power before, but it's certain that it has been strengthened. It was already a bit stronger than the black steel spear before but now it's near three times that. It still doesn't match the dragon spear in my storage, but it has become about as strong as the other magic spears.

This is what they call weapon reinforcement I guess.
Although, it was probably one step away from failure judging from that feel. If it fail, it's easy to imagine that Liza's spear would have broke.

When I look at the log, I've gained several skills.

>[Magic Manipulation Skill Acquired]

But I've been putting magic power into magic tool and Nana up to now....
I guess I have to not only insert but also absorb to meet the requirement.

>[Magic Bestowal Skill Acquired]
>[Weapon Reinforcement Skill Acquired]

In addition, I also acquired this title.

>Title [Magic Spear Blacksmith] Acquired.

Since they look useful, I activate the skills.

◇

I try putting magic into an ordinary dagger.

It's different.

In case of Liza's spear, it feels like pouring water on a shallow plate, while with this dagger, it's like pouring water into a coarse draining casket. Magic power that has been inserted immediately escapes feel.
Of course, it also isn't shining with red light.

This time I take out leg of a flying ant and try putting magic power into it. It's better than with the dagger earlier, but it feels like a clogged up pipe with water draining out. The poured magic power feel stuck and drained, it's annoying.

Should I try to forcibly insert the magic power?
I try what I've just thought, and it burst scattering away. I guess Liza's spear was one step away from becoming this.

I test again with a new ant's leg. So it really explodes by pouring 10 MP.
Is Liza's spear special or is it because the difference in material?

I decide to try with material that looks more rugged.
I take out a dragon tooth and try it. Although I said tooth, it's 30 cm big. When I put magic power into it, it feels like with the ant's leg. The difference is the magic endurance, it's fine even with 500 MP, but I stop there since the tooth becomes cracked.

Since I'd feel bad for Tama and Mia if I go back too late, I decide to finish for this evening. Without forgetting to set the menu, I go back.

The angelic figures of sleeping Tama and Mia greet me when I get back. Tama wakes up when she hears the sound of me leaning Liza's spear on the wagon. Afterward, when she realizes the one who make the sound is me, she slovenly sprawls with "Gude~", but it seems that she isn't sleeping.

She sits beside me, attempts to climb up on my laps, and sleeps there while curling up.
I remember neko nabe seeing her figure, it's soothing. I decide to do the watch in place of the two until morning.

6-4. The First Thieves [Revised]

Satou's here. I thought that the three precepts are, "Don't kill", "Don't steal", "Don't violate", but in truth, it wasn't, "Don't steal", but, "Don't burn". However, even if it's not one of the three, bad things are bad, right.

◇

""Good morning, master.""
"Good morning."

Lulu and Liza who have immediately woken up with the first sign of morning sun give me morning greetings.
I let Tama down from my laps, and take Liza to the spear in order to apologize to her.

"T, this is."

Even Liza is speechless.
Since externally, her important spear looks like it has been scribbled. Let's apologize first before I say, "The performance has been improved.".
After I make up my mind, I step forward toward Liza-- but, she's not looking at me.

Seemingly to check on the spear's condition, she tries stabbing with it many times. The red light that appears when she does heavy blow is stronger than before.

"Master!"

After she finishes swinging the spear, she comes closer to me. I decide to listen to her complaints before I make an excuse. Her voice's tone is a bit high, would be good if she's not angry.

"This is, it must be a reward right!"

Since I don't understand the flow of the conversation, I ask her.

"Arisa was saying to Lulu, 'If you properly service master, you'll get a reward someday.', she said."

Those, "service", and, "reward" probably have different meaning. That Arisa, don't indoctrinate weird things to Lulu.
For the time being, since she looks really happy, let's ride on this flow.

"It's because Liza has always worked hard. How is the spear?"
"Yes, the weight is the same as usual, but it is now possible for my arm to become one with the spear up until the tip."

She looks so happy, she's rubbing her cheeks on the spear, I apologize to her for arbitrarily doing something to her spear after the breakfast before we depart. Liza says, "My spear and I, everything is master's.", but I remind myself not to take advantage of that.

◇

Since Lulu will call me when Liza finishes breakfast preparation, I pick a towel and go to river beside the camping ground. There's a river nearby, so I want to take a bath there. By the way, the water temperature is below 10 degree (celcius), so normally I'd get a cold. Although, I don't feel that cold, maybe thanks to ice resistance.
Rather, I'm more interested with Lulu's gaze which I feel from over the bushes. During the cooking, she occasionally takes a glance over here. I thought the bushes should be tall enough to cover me, but...
She's at an age where she would be interested with the opposite sex, I guess it can't be helped.

Sine it would be troublesome in various ways when Arisa wakes up, I wash my body with a soap quickly.
I see several fish outlines before I wear my clothes, so I throw skewers at them catching around 10 fish and put them into the Storage.
I've thought that grilled fish are a staple of breakfast, but Lulu and Liza have

already started cooking, cutting in between them now would be boorish.

I wipe my body roughly and wear clothes.
My hair is still wet, but it should be dried soon when it gets close to fire.

"Good morning, master."
"Good morning Nana. Try saying some more words after morning greeting."
"Good morning, master."
"Yep, that's good."

I pat Nana's head while praising her.
Ye~p. Her outward appearance is that of an adult woman, so patting her head looks really out place.

"Morning."
"Ning~?"
"Good morning nano desu!"
"Good Morniii!"

The other members are waking up. I also greet them back.
Still, what's wrong Arisa?

"Why?"

What is she saying?
Arisa points my wet hair.

"Say something if you want to take a bath!"
"No way. You'll go peep if I tell you right?"
"Of course! It's my natural job as a slave to wash my master's back!"
"Your real motive?"
"A boy bathing at the center of mother nature! Missing that is a regrettable situation!"

When you said that so frankly, I could not punish you.
Usually, before we go to sleep or after breakfast, I go away alone to wipe my body with wet towel and Arisa usually try to peep me which she did once when she managed to escape from Liza's watch. I don't necessarily scold her when she peeps but since it'd be a bad influence to other girls, I'd give

her spanking if I catch her peeping.

...How do I say this, feels like our role as man and woman is reversed.

◇

That day, my magic practice ends in failure again, to have a change of pace, I sit at the end of the wagon and make small shields using some wood.
Since I get Armor Creation skill after making one, I put it point to the maximum and activate it. Even though the shields are made of woods, they're made with the highest level technique of armor creation.
Since it's messy, I put a sheet for the fallen wood chips. I present two shields made after I've acquired the skill to Pochi and Tama. There are some shields in my storage but there is none which could fits Pochi and Tama so I have to make them myself.
I've only just made three of it but since the time is almost up, I clear away the tools.

Arisa who has noticed it, faces toward me.

"The guys you mentioned earlier?"
"Yeah, very soon. There are two people on the highway, five people in each forest on the sides of highway, and two people on a tree a bit further. Arisa will deal with the two on the highway, while the five in the right forest will be taken care by Liza, Pochi and Tama. I'll defeat the two on the tree and the five in the left forest. I will leave Lulu's guard to Mia and Nana."

Everyone nods at my instruction. Since I've explained it beforehand, they don't have any particular question.
Everyone is tense, but the enemies are no big deals. On the left side, beside a level 7, the others are small fries at level 2-3. The beast girls could annihilate them alone if they want.

When we enter the forest after a slight curve, there are a man and a woman sitting on the road.
They look like normal villagers. "Oo~i", they call out over here.
When the wagon loosen its speed, the man approach while trying to say

something.

"I'm sorry, my wife is,s,s,s,s."
"Fuhn, I have no interest with thieves' acting."

Arisa hit the man and woman with mind magic without asking. She had a hard time choosing a location so our horses wouldn't get swept with her attack. Even though she loves to act a bit dramatic herself.

Yes, these 14 men and women are thieves.

Without checking the result of that battle, I use 2 crossbows alternately to shoot down the bowmen on the tree. They shouldn't be dead.
The beast girls jump out from the back of the wagon and begin their assault in the forest. I also jump from the coachman-stand and charge toward the opposite forest.

In just a few minutes, [Oyu Village Thieves Gang] is annihilated. Half of them are injured but none dies. We hang them on trees while disarming their weapons. I feel wasteful to use ropes on them, so I roll them up with tree vines, per Liza's suggestion.
I've noticed this with the accident faker in the city back then, there is no punishment for, [Injuring] and, [Assaulting] in this world. Just to be sure, I check on everyone's status and their Reward and Punishment hasn't changed.

The thieves have been subjected to Arisa's magic, Sleeping Field to make them sleep.
Just in case, checking on the map, there is no village called, "Oyu Village", in this region.

"By the way, what do you want to do by capturing them? Isn't the earl-san's city still relatively far away? Isn't it faster if we just kill them?"
"Since I was ordered not to kill if possible, I did not kill anyone, but thieves should be killed as soon as one comes across them. If master wants the prize money then their heads are enough. Furthermore, even if ones kill a thief, their Reward & Punishment won't change into [Murderer]."

Arisa and Liza's suggestions are quite brutal, but I wonder if that's just how

it is in this world. If I overlook these guys here, they would probably kill or sell merchants or travelers who use this road as slaves.

Even so, I don't want to see the beast girls kill people, and I, myself, don't want to kill. I want to avoid murder as much as possible.
But then, I feel like I would retract that if my companions' lives are in danger. Even if I'm a hypocrite, I am not a saint, if that time really happens I'll give in.
I did kill Zen anyway, even if it was his own intention.

"Let's bring them to the earl's city and sell them as crime slaves. Is it not more profitable than killing them here?"

Even though I don't want to kill them, I have no intention of letting them go. I will have them pay for their crime adequately. Their [Reward and Punishment] stats are filled with [Murder], [Rape], [Theft] and more. There is no innocent one.
Liza has a face that looks like she has more to say, but it seems that she doesn't have any intention to object my words more.

"It can't be helped~ let's do it like that."

While saying so, Arisa shakes her head like some kind of gaijin. I understand that she's worried, but that gesture is slightly petulant.
Then, she points her finger at me, and continues with these words.

"If your life is in danger, don't hesitate to kill the opponent, understand. That is the rule of this world. I won't forgive you if you drag your peacefulness like that country and get yourself killed pitifully!"

◇

Still, 14 people are too many indeed. Even though the wagon hardly has any luggage, more than half of the wagon's back is buried with the thieves. Morever, they stink.
Since it'd be annoying if they wake up, in addition to Arisa's magic, I make them drink sleeping potions that I've made on the first camping night and

take them along to the earl's city while they're sleeping.

Although it's just for two days, the thieves' smell and snores are huge nuisances.
If we find another thieves, I'll leave them half-dead. I did not think that bringing criminals away from a remote place would be this troublesome.

6-5. Clean-up and Rumor

Satou's here. The only contact I've had with refugees was with the news or fund-raising commercials, but in this world, I unexpectedly come across ones in close proximity.

◇

It was already late in the noon when we arrived on the street of Nouki town. The disposal of the thieves took more time than I had thought.

This town is the second biggest town within earl Kuhanou's territory, it's situated in a typical fashion of a trading town. Nevertheless, the population is not more than 20000. The land size is also only about a fourth of Seryuu city. 30% of the population are slaves, but most are general or lower slaves, while criminal slaves are quite few.

The thieves--they were confirmed as thieves with the usual Yamato stone--were sold to slave traders that the gatekeeper had called. The men were worth 2 silver coins a person. The ones with bow or weapon skills and higher-leveled were were even more expensive, but the women were cheaper. A middle-aged woman was worth for only 1 silver coin.
As a reward for suppressing the thieves, I was given 10 copper coins per head. Was the price right?

The total amount to 48 silver coins and 140 copper coins. With these much, a lot of bounty hunters would have come instead of me.

The taxes for entering the city are, 1 big copper coin for a commoner, 2 copper coins for a slave, and the wagon cost 2 big copper coins, I let it be taken from the reward.

I chat with the gatekeeper while he's looking for a small bag for containing the 5 silver and 10 copper coins change. He's wearing a shirt dyed blue, I wonder if it's the gatekeeper color here.

"You've really saved us. Nowadays, a lot of refugees coming from other territories are becoming thieves."
"Was there a disaster somewhere?"

Speaking of refugees, it mean that there's probably a war or disaster.
According to him, seems that there are a lot of refugees who run away from the next earldom to become either serfs in rural farm village or slaves in general slaves in the city of this Kuhanou earldom.
People who don't want to become slaves hide in the mountain and live by hunting animals. Seems that they also work in the field, but, as winter comes, a lot increasingly become thieves.

I almost feel sorry to the thieves, but they have [Murder] in their Reward and Punishment, so sympathy is probably unnecessary.

>Title [Bounty Hunter] Acquired.

◇

Now then, we were able to finish our errands on the entrance, but since I wanted to buy various things on shortage, I decided to stay for a night.
The inside of the town is similar with Seryuu city but there aren't a lot of two-story buildings, yet low-rises are many.

The town feel a bit listless unrelated with the population density.
Confirming from the gatekeeper, this town also has strong prejudice against demi-humans, but they're allowed to stay in the inn if one pay extra and they can buy things normally on the shops if they're paying good.
Unfortunately, since they're not allowed to get inside where the riches and nobles lives, we are warned not to get close.

After entrusting the wagon in the inn, we're going to buy equipments for all members. In a place not far from the inn, weapons and armors are lined up on display.

First, let's buy armor for five people in the armor shop. They're for me,

Nana and the three beastkin girls. Since a whole body armor looks to require too much time to wear, I buy iron helmets without face protector, breastplates with belt fixture, light greaves of the same type, and gauntlets that protect only the back of hand.
The remaining three says that they don't need armor so they don't buy ones, in exchange, I buy some extra shields. Bucklers and Round Shield made from metal, three pieces each.

The armor shop old-man tried to touch Nana's butt when he was measuring her for the armor, but my impregnable guard didn't let him to. I didn't think that crisis perception would be helpful for this. It goes without saying that I used it as the final ammunition for bargaining.

The total price were 30 gold coins, but I negotiate until it was slightly cheaper than the market price, and finally got it down to 14 gold coins.

Next in the weapon shop, I bought bows and arrows for Mia. Since there were only 3 short bows that Mia was able to pull, it didn't take long. I was able to negotiate it down to 1 gold coins with 30 arrows added.

Afterwards, we decided to divide into three groups and move separately after putting the luggage in the inn.

The beastkin girls, Arisa and Lulu are entrusted to buy ingredients, daily necessities and cookwares.
I give them 20 silver coins for the shopping list, and 1 big copper coin each for their allowance. The reason for that much silver coins is because I ask them to buy a lot of groceries.

Like the gatekeeper earlier said, the situation is a bit rough with all the refugees, so I'm buying enough for anticipating the worst situation for self-sustaining if we can't get into the town or village. We have a lot of meat, but we don't have enough vegetables, cereals, salt and seasoning.

Pochi and Tama reply back with, "Meat~", when I give them their allowances. Even though they eat so much meat every day, they still want to eat more huh, that's amazing even for favorite food.

"I'm tired."

"Maybe you get tired from the crowds, do you want to rest at the inn?"
"Nn."
"Nana, I'm sorry, but could stay with her?"
"Yes, master. I will stay beside mother."
"No."

Since Mia is tired with the crowd, she's going to rest at the inn. I feel sorry if I leave her alone, so I suggest Nana to be with her, but maybe she doesn't want to be alone with someone with her face, she refuses with, "Don't need."

Even though Nana herself has become emotionally attached to her, this is sad.
The meaning of calling Mia mother for Nana, seems because Mia is the blood provider. Although it seems that homonculus is different with clone, I wonder if she's still her genetic mother?
Since Mia looks like she really dislike the calling, I have Nana compromise to call her, "Mia", not, "Mother".

"Nana, let's go together. Mia, what do you want as souvenirs?"
"I want a lute."
"I understand, I'll buy it if someone is selling them."
"I've left money and fruits on the table, so eat something if you're hungry okay."
"Nn."

I've put 1 big copper coin and several fruits on the table.

◇

First, we're going to magic tools shop.

This shop isn't just a magic books and magic tools shop, but also an alchemy shop and a bookstore. The shopkeeper is wearing a hood and a thin veil that hide her face, save for her eyes, so I can't see it well. Since the AR indicates that she's 16 years old, she's probably the daughter of the real shopkeeper.

When we go inside the shop, I see the girl is wearing glasses with green lenses, so I ask Nana to wait outside. The explanation from the AR is confusing like always, but since it looks like an inferior version of Yamato stone, I can't risk Nana's race from getting known.

"Hello, I'd like to buy reagents for potion, do you have any in stock?"
"I could sell you three packages. 1 silver coin each. We're a bit short in magic cores, so I won't give you discount. If you don't want to, you can stop."

Oh, it's an old woman's voice. Is she using some sort of weird voice-changing magic tools?
I'm given a small paper, like some sort of prescription from doctors, when I receive the packages. I think her profit is a bit too high, but since the price is in line with the market price according to estimation skill, it's not like she's overcharging.

By the way, the potion reagent is powder that glitter when it's used. It has other various uses too, it's an indispensable material for training.

Come to think of it, monsters in this territory were awfully scarce.

I don't feel like buying with these prices indeed. Since I have books with the instruction, should I just make one myself? Let's just buy the needed materials.

"Then, do you have stabilizers?"
"Yes, if it's stabilizers, I have a lot. If you have magic cores, won't you share it?"

What an abrupt girl. Asking me to sell the magic cores.
Then I remember the main material for potion's reagent and stabilizer.

I take out a magic core from my pocket and estimate its market price on my palm. It's about three times pricier than in Seryuu city. Yet, it's still only 3 big copper coins. I put five on the table.

"You, stop putting magic cores inside your pocket even if you keep them together with stabilizer powder. What would you do if they absorb magic

power when you use magic and explode?"

What the, they explode huh.

That reminds me, the ants legs were exploding as well.
I thank the girl for the advice and ask her the right method to keep them. It seems that you have to smear them in stabilizer and then cover them together in cloths.

The girl speaks ill of the magic cores, like, "They're small", or, "The color is light", but she still buy them for 4 big copper coins each. Since it's just right, I buy stabilizer worth of that price.
The girl comes back from the back with about 10 kilograms bag of stabilizer. That bag is somehow lightly floating while following beside the girl.

Ooh, that looks magic-like, or rather, like a magic trick.

"Is that magic?"
"This is self-propelling board <<Floating Board>>. It's not really a rare magic, isn't it?"

Although she's saying that, I could see her looking slightly proud. If I recall right, that magic name does appear in the introductory magic book.

I confirm the stabilizer that she have brought. The AR says, [Stabilizer/Fine Powder of Ugi Leaves]. The market price is 5 gold coins. 1 gold coin is equal to 20 big copper coins, so they're too much for reimbursing the magic cores.

"They're fine powder of Ugi leaves, are they."
"That's right, you know well. These are rare around here, but just before, a merchant brought them in mass as a payment for medicines. Before they're spoiled."
"I think this quantity is too much for 20 big copper coins though?"
"You, you know value of things huh."
"And I don't think I need that much though?"
"Please don't say that, I'll trade it for half the market price, so won't you take it?"
"Are you looking for gold coins?"

I could buy it, but do I need this much?

"No no, I need magic cores rather than gold, won't you share a bit more?"

Well, they're ingredients for making potion reagent so she probably guess that I still have more, but what does she want to use it for?

"You know that there will be a fighting tournament in the Ougock Dukedom next month, right? The participating knights are buying large amounts of potion from the alchemists. So they can't make potion for the sick people."

I see, there's such tournament huh. I don't know if this girl would use it the way she's saying, but it's evident that she's desperate. I have a lot anyway, so it's fine to give 10 more, I guess.

"I would like these and another 10 magic cores of the same level."
"I'm not sure if I have that many, but I'll thoroughly check my stock."
"Please do so, you can bring these stabilizer ahead."

I bring the stabilizer to the wagon and put it away in the storage, then I'm choosing magic cores. Since it'd look suspicious if they're all exactly the same, I mix the 10 magic cores suitably. I blend 1 high level one among them. It's a core that worths 3 silver coins.
I believe this is from a bone golem. I can know the price with estimation skill, but I want to find out the reaction of a professional when they see one.

"How about these?"
"You're fast, the qualities are the same like before, are they. Huh? This one is the only awfully nice core."

It's the strongish core I've blended

"Is it to your liking?"
"Yes, I'm saved. I could make stronger medicine with this."

I see, according to this reaction, I could take out magic cores from monsters with level up to 20 without problem.
It's not written in up to intermediate book, but it seems that depending on

magic cores level used, the resulting reagent rank would be different.

"As a gratitude, you can take one from among these."

While saying so, the girl searches the shelves with rustling sounds and bring out three scrolls.
AR indication says, [Scroll, Magic Art:Shield], [Scroll, Magic Art:Sonar], [Scroll, Magic Art:Short Stun]. Each is priced at 5-6 silver coins.
How do I say this, the shop will go bankrupt if this girl keep working here.

Every one of them seems to be an elementary magic art scroll. Shield is the most difficult among these.

"I'm sorry, even though you're especially offering this for me, I already have beginner level magic books..."
"You, do you not know how scrolls are used? These are disposable magic tools. Put magic power into it while uttering the command word to use it, it's convenient when you're attacked by monsters."

Hoo? That's great.

"That means, you can use them even without magic art skills?"
"You can use them. You'll use 20-30% more magic power, but there is no weird repercussion like if a person without skill chants the magic."

I see, that's convenient.
But, they looks easy to abuse-- I guess that's why, it was limited in Seryuu city.
That's right, are there scrolls for life magic?

"Do you have scrolls for life magic?"
"None, if you have money to buy such things, isn't it cheaper to just hire charm users?"

Unfortunately, there's none. It seems since the production cost for making the scroll is no different to other magic, there's no one who make them.
But, Nana can use those magics besides short stun. By the way, in addition with the two, Nana can also use, [Magic Arrow], [Body Reinforcement (Light Boost)], and [Signal].

"If possible, could you let me have the three of them? Of course, I will pay the other two with cash."
"I'm sorry, but if I sell more than one, the officials would get noisy."

I decide to buy [Shield] scroll after being at loss for a while.
Let's try to use it when we get out of the town.

6-6. Tavern and Rumors

Satou's here. On the old computer game, tavern was only useful for changing party members, but on TRPG, it was the place to gather information for the scenario.
Since drunkards are talkative.

◇

"Thanks for waiting, Nana."
"Yes, master."

Uh, did I make her wait too long.
Maybe thanks to the hood she's wearing, there is no weird guy trying to pick her up, but she looks quite bored. Nana picks my arm and begins to walk.

"Let's go, master."

We're walking while linking arms. Umm, Nana-san? My arm is in heaven.
Since the long cane I've bought for Mia at the beginning is being a hindrance, I switch it to my other hand.

"What's wrong?"
"I've learned it when master was in the shop."

What's this, I feel a bad premonition.

"When man and woman walk together, they unite their arms."

She's saying so while having, "How's that" face, I can even hear the sound effect.
<TLN: Google キリッ for more accurate expression ;)>
I understand what she has learned, but there's no particular reason to part

our arms, so let's go shopping while being like this.
Since Nana is looking like she really want to get praised, I read the mood and praise her. It's subtle, but She looks satisfied. And I'm also satisfied with the amazing feeling.

First, let's buy clothes for Nana and Mia.

However, there's no shop which sells ready-made clothes except the second-hand ones in this town. It seems you have to tailor them if you want new clothes. I think Arisa has said she could make clothes, so I decide to buy cloth and materials for sewing.
They're selling underwear normally, so I buy shares for the two. These underwear are called drawers right? Feels like I've entered Alice's Wonderland.

Next are tools for manufacturing things.

By asking a pedestrian for the location, I've bought various tools for woodworking, metal carving, leather crafting, and blacksmithing.

I've also bought glue, nails and other materials, but beside nails, they're expensive. I've also wanted to buy some hinges, but they were out of stock.

Necessary things for blacksmithing like furnace or anvil were not available, so I couldn't buy them. Though even if I could, there was no way to carry them anyway.

Since we would be standing out if we bring lumbers to the inn, I pay for it to be sent to the hotel.

"Nana, shouldn't we go to next shop soon?"
"Master, please wait a bit longer."
"Is it fun?"
"Yes, very. It's so fluffy and soft... yes, cute."

Since Nana is fascinated with the wood shaving waste from the wood planing, and doesn't seem to want to move, we spend a bit of time in the wood workshop.
If the workshop old man didn't get her the thinnest and long wood shaving,

she might be looking till dusk.

I purchase bottles and containers for putting medicine since I incidentally catch sight of them on the next workshop we've gone. The price around here is cheaper than on Seryuu city. It might be because the woods that act as fuel are cheap.

We go to the general store at the end.

I was taught in magic shop that there might be cooking books there.

Nana who have been restlessly looking around inside the general store, wanders to a particular display case.

"What's the matter?"
"Master, what is this?"

While saying so, Nana pick up something to her hand, it's a wooden barrette.
It's carved with simple design and three pale small stones are fitted in. The stones are not gemstones, but river stones with stripped patterns. It looks like jade so I appraise it, and the result is actinolite. The name sounds as if it could be used as catalyst for light magic, but it's just a pretty stone.
The market price of the barrette is two copper coins. There are 5 other wooden barrettes, but they're all priced the same.

It's a bit plain for decorating Nana's honey-colored hair. I think she'll look better with a silver barrette.

Nana is looking at that barrette without getting tired.
The store's old woman who see that begins promoting.

"Fe, fe ,fe, I also have ones made from silver, or adorned with gemstones, do you want to see it?"
"Right then, since you're offering, let's take a look at it."

She puts out three expensive barrette made from silver, I try putting one on Nana's hair. Yup, the silver one does match her well.

"Oh my, you have truly beautiful wife."
"That's right, I'm still charmed sometimes."

I've certainly got used with the beautiful faces of Lulu and Arisa, but Nana and Mia are quite pretty too. She's not my wife, but I don't need to retort to every lip service.

Nana strokes the first barrette with her fingers in rapture even while we're having that conversation.
You like it that much huh.
I'm sorry for the old woman for bringing out the other things, but I purchase the wooden barrette instead.
I also buy several blue braids as souvenirs since it was placed nearby. It's just right since Lulu usually tie hemp cord on her hair when she's making breakfast. There are also ribbons, but I stop. I've given some to Lulu as present before, but I've never see her wearing it. It probably wasn't to her liking.

Now then, the main thing is the cooking books, but it's different from what I've imagined. Rather than recipe books for what delicious foods from what towns, or what kind of materials are there, it's a gourmet guide book instead. Of course, I buy it, but it doesn't seem usable for improving my cooking.

"Are you looking for curious foods? Then how about some herbs or pickled vegetables?"

The old woman brings out some bottles and jars sealed with string from inside a shelf.

Around 20 kinds of things like, garlic and leeks pickled with oil, pickled cabbage and Chinese cabbage, and yellow powder that looks like dried mustard and others.

Even though so many come out, there's no pickled plum. Too bad.

There are also sweet things like honey, or
green-tea powder-like sugar called Ugi, I'm buying them.

Furthermore, somehow I'm coaxed to buy a tool for extracting fat from meat. Old woman, you're good at business.

Since I've bought so many things, I thought that I'd carry them many times over to the inn but the old woman calls manly man from the shop's back and has him to transport the groceries to the inn.

Right, I almost forgot.

"Do you have a lute?"
"I do."

The old woman points at Nana. It's put together on the same desk as the barrette. Not seeing it even though it's right in front of your eyes, it happens often eh.
I purchase the lute and string for Mia. I try playing the string and, [Tiin], sounds comes out.

>[Musical Performance Skill Acquired]

◇

"Ehehe~ Look, look at these bounties!"

The wagon is loaded with a lot of ingredients and woods and tools I've bought.
The thing that Arisa present are eggs inside a basket. There around 20 of them.

"They're a bit expensive, but I've gotten some duck eggs~ with this we can eat egg dishes!"
"Eggs are fast to go bad, so let's think what to make before. How long can we keep it?"
"It's already winter, so about 2-3 days?"
"We could make something like karaage or croquette."
"C, can you make it?"
"If I know the recipe I could, but I can only vaguely remember the

ingredients and the process."

I tried to bring up the subject to Arisa, but it seems she doesn't know.

"Uh, I should've kept trying to cook for myself without giving up."

I barely remember that I should use eggs and flour. No, or was it potato starch?
Since the storage can preserve things, I should just get five eggs inside and do trial and error during the journey.

Later, I'm taught by Liza that eggs can be stored for several months. Don't modern eggs have short expiration dates? I don't know if it's because parallel world, but I won't complain the long-lastingness.

We decide to eat dinner at the tavern on the first floor of the inn that evening. Since there's an empty space on the back, we join two tables and sit there. Mia sits on the chair furthest back. Since it'll be full of people later, she's not good with crowd.

The meal consists of moderate amount of tenderloins with boiled vegetables, fish and radish soup, stir-fried vegetables, dried berry, flat bread made from Gabo fruit, and pickled Gabo leaves. The aren't a lot of meat, but the stomach-filling tenderloins are popular with the beastkin girls.
At the opposite side of me, Mia continues playing the lute that has just been bought even though it's dinner, she probably likes it.

"Mia, it's dinner, so eat your meal."
"Nn."

She nods at my words, but doesn't let go of the lute. Her performance is over, but seems she's wondering whether to continue or eat.

"Aan."

She opens her small mouth while starting to play the lute. Since she looks like a cute young bird, I put a bite-sized vegetable on her mouth.
She chews it hard while playing a song. I wonder if it's an elf tune, it's a tune

with wanting to hurry home feeling.
My sleeves is pulled from the side, and when I look there, Arisa is opening her mouth while point her finger there.

"Aa~an"
"Eat it yourself."
"Doing that only to Mia, isn't it unfai~r?"

Can't be helped when you say it like that. I give her a mouthful of pickled Gabo leaves. It's sour and bitter, the taste is unique. She probably won't ask for another with this.

She's saying, "Mugu", and, "I want something sweet please.", but she doesn't say she want another, so it's a success.

"Satou, Aan."
"Aa~n?"
"Aan, nano desu."

What comes into my view is Mia, with Pochi and Tama who are sitting on each sides of her opening their mouth. When the three are lined up like this, they really look like young birdlings. I put a mouthful for each one in turn. Following them, Lulu also doing, "Aan", while looking shy. I want you to stop opening your small mouth while pining your hair and closing your eyes, I would imagine something different. Liza is also doing, "Aan" since it looks interesting, but I have no comment. Since she doesn't look uncomfortable, there's probably no problem.

My sleeve is pulled again.
I thought that it was Arisa again, but it was from the opposite side. Over there, Nana is doing, "Aan", while presenting a dish.

I see, since Nana couldn't eat, she's serving it instead.

Umu, I'm fine with feeding little girls, but if they look like adult beautiful girls, the destructive power is high. I eat the dish while feeling bashful.

Violet-san on the opposite side seemingly can't stand my attitude, and she's saying things like, "Flirting is forbidden", or, "Riajuu should just explode.".

Since those kinds of slightly peevish protest came out, another, "Aan", is prohibited.
The one who took advantage of this in the first place is you, Arisa, you know?

Mia is concentrating on eating her foods with Liza's warning. I'm a bit shocked that she's paying heed to Liza's word than mine--I might be spoiling her too much--the dinner continues while I'm feeling like a father.

Mia who finishes her dinner first starts playing some musics. The beastkin girls and Arisa are eating their second round of meal.
At first the music was calm but then it turns cheerful after a request from the drunkards. Even though Mia is playing with expressionless and uninterested face, she still receives the drunkard's impulsive request.

Once Mia musical begins, the visitors begin to increase until it's full house, even though it was empty when we just got here. Arisa is judging the drunkard request properly. She's doing it while having meals, skillful.

And then, when they've finished eating, Arisa leads Pochi and Tama to match the song and sing together cheerfully while joining shoulders. The three are wearing hoods, so they look subtly suspicious. I thought that I remember this song, it's the anisong Arisa sung during our trip.

"What a fun song huh."
"It's a song from the hometown of those girls."

The merchant-like man on the seat behind starts talking to me, so we're chatting while putting sake to our cups. I'm drinking normal juice, not sake. The sake here (ale), is too sour, or rather, it's acid it's undrinkable.
The stories in our chat are mostly harmless, but there are also some interesting ones. In summary, the chats are like these.

"I've just been through baron Muno's territory and I was offered to buy slaves from several villages there, it was terrible."
"The harvest this year isn't bad, I wonder why."
"Speaking of slaves, if you bring out slaves from baron Muno's territory, you need to pay tax. Farmers who want to go to other territory also need to pay tax. Was it emmigrant tax. The border soldiers even specially inspect for it."

The merchants exaggeratively shiver for almost buying slaves themselves.
I thought it was supposed to be marquis according to that travel journal, so I asked.

"Don't you know young man? They were certainly marquis up until about 20 years ago but the whole family of marquis Muno were attacked by large flocks of the dead, and the castle and the soldiers, everyone were massacred."
"I forgot the title, but it was even made into books and drama."
"At that time, it became an uproar and was thought to be an attack from the demon lord, the groceries and medicines prices went up and I made a big profit."

It's an imprudence story, he seems to be an unscrupulous merchant.

"I also remember to feel relieved that the king had ordered the holy knights to dispatch, limiting the dead army from overflowing to other territories."
"All related families of marquis Muuno, including the collateral family who married into another families, died of mysterious cause. The current baron supposedly has absolutely no relation to the old one. He's either a nephew or younger brother of the neighboring duke, he has succeeded the family name to manage the territory."

That story sounds familiar. What comes to my mind is his (Zen's) bleached bone face.
I've become a listener, while properly chiming in sometimes and pouring sake, I press them to continue.

"There's a strange rumor about that dukedom. There's a man who will buy corpses of anything."
"Isn't that just a simple rumor? There's a forest which became a place for burial custom due to some faith, and the rumor started from someone who saw the proceeding they said."
"Is that what it is, so they're traveling on the highway where monsters and wolves appear for several days while carrying corpses, faith is an amazing thing."
"Something that can't be said to merchants like us."

However, "Corpse Buying Man", that looks like something that would become a novel's title.
Speaking of the duke, I've heard a rumor in the morning.

"It seems that there's a fighting tournament on the dukedom, is everyone familiar with that?"
"People surely gather there, but merchants do too."
"Thus, merchants' number are reduced in other place. I intend to fill that gap for my business."

I've thought that this is a world where the money circulation takes time, but it seems there are many ways to gain money.

Mia's performance has stopped before I notice. The surrounding are urging her, but looks it's too much, she says one word, "Tired.", and sleep on my lap. I think you don't need to go as far under the table though.

We take that chance and go back to the room. Arisa says, "We got a lot of offering~.", while showing a bowl with a lot of coins. They're mostly pennies, but there are some copper coins mixed in. Quite generous, those drunk old men are.

I let Mia sleep in the room. There's no 8 person room as expected, so I rent two 4 person room. The three beastkin girls and my room, and Arisa and the others' room. We had various disputes during the room's distribution. I'm afraid that I'd think something impolite if I see Nana innocently sleeps on the bed.

I've thought of doing something on the night town stealthily, but I'm prevented by Pochi and Tama. "Let's sleep together nodesu." with gleaming eyes, they bind both my hands. The wire-puller is Arisa without a doubt, but I can't shake off the two who approach with innocent faces.

I pass on the adult's night once in a while~.

6-7. I want to Practice Magic [Cheat Arc]

Satou's here. The impulse to use the thing you've obtained is probably no different regardless of ages or places.
Even in parallel world, it still is.

◇

"■▼▲▲　▲■▲▲　▲▲ Shield"

A transparent shape that looks like a Shield appear in front of me who's holding a short cane. The size is large enough to cover my whole body.

"Here I go～ Psycho Ball."

The invisible magic ball fired by Arisa got repelled by the Shield and disappeared.
Oh, a new indicator has appeared below my HP bar, [Shield HP], it says. The HP is 100, and it has decreased by one from Arisa's attack earlier. I wait for a while, but it's not restoring back.

"Is it alright for the next one?"
"Come at me."
"Here I go Tsubaki-kun! This is, my Overdrive shoot!"

Arisa fires Shock Wave while parodying something. The Shield shooks from that attack, but it's repelled just like with the psycho ball earlier.
This time the Shield's HP decreases by 3 points. So it doesn't decrease by fixed value, but depends on the spell huh?

"Then, next, please use Magic Arrow, Nana."
"Yes, master."

A magic circle appears before Nana's forehead and the magic arrow is shot from there.

The magic arrow disappears accompanied with sounds like metal clashing. The Shield's HP only decreases by 1.

"Next, Mia, please."
"Nn. ■■■ ■■ ■■■■ Water Shoot"

Mia creates Water Shoot from the water inside the jug beside her, and then fires it to me. At the moment of impact, the Shield shooks a bit. The magic is dissolved and the water splashes under. The Shield's HP only decreases by 1 point.

"Mia, do you have any area attack?"
"I do."
"Then, please do that from the front."
"It's dangerous."
"Do you have attack that would be safe for everyone but me?"
"I do."
"Then please do that one."
"...Satou?"
"I'll avoid it before it hit me."
"Nn. ■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■■ Acid Mist"

White mist hits the Shield. The mist is prevented by the Shield, but the grasses around me are dying. The Shield's HP decreases by 3 points.

So direct attack magic is 1 point, while area attack magic is 3 points huh. Isn't this Shield too strong?

"Tama, please throw some stones. Aim at the area around my stomach."
"Aye!"

Swoosh, the stone tears through the air, and just like all the magic before, it's prevented. The stone bounces back unlike the magic. Tama is getting better at stone throwing, Her throw has gotten quite faster. The Shield's HP only decreases by 1 point.

"Alright, next, Pochi. Shoot with a crossbow, since it's dangerous, shoot from around there okay."
"Understood, nodesu~."

The short arrow that Pochi shoots has different aim, she accurately shoots at my left foot that my finger has pointed out. Of course, the arrow bounces back before it hit me. The Shield's HP decreases by 1 point, just like with Tama's stone-throwing.

Now then, next is Liza, but honestly, I'm afraid with the serious Liza who will be using [That Spear]. I cancel the Shield, and put it up once again. I understand that it's actually not necessary, but it's a problem with feeling.

"Liza, after you fill the spear full with magic power, please do heavy blow and thrusting with all your might."
"I understand, master. Please be prepared!"

No no, that line is scary.
Bang, the sound of Liza's rushing, she thrusts out the magic spear.
The magic spear pushes the Shield, but just as it's about to hit me, it gets knocked back. At the same time, something invisible is pushing my body. I see, it seems the Shield is suitable to hold back mass attacks huh.

The red ripple that appears between the spear and the Shield disappears. As soon as the ripple disappear, Liza pulls her spear. Let me make this clear, even if Liza spear pierced through the Shield, it would slip through my armpit.

The Shield HP decreases only by 3 points. Even though it was flashy, it's the same as area attack huh.

"Liza, next, try to attack me thrice."
"Yes."

Each attack decreases the Shield's HP by 1.
The next experiment will be the last.

"Lulu, please throw a pebble."
"Y, yes, I'll do my best."

However, contrary to Lulu's spirit, the stone flies toward the day after tomorrow. Right, she isn't used to hitting people, unexpectedly it won't fly

straight.

"Lulu."
"I, I'm sorry master. Eii. Eii."

Probably thinking that she'd get scolded, Lulu desperately tries to throw stones many times over with upset face. Aah, that's a waste for her beautiful face.

"Lulu, calm down."
"Y, yes."

Maybe thinking that she's disapproved, Lulu falls dejected. Her troubled face is cute too.

"Lulu, take a pebble under your feet."
"Yes, I got it."
"Then, walk three step forward from there."
"Yes.... Umm, isn't this too close?"

Lulu is approximately 1 meter away from the Shield.

"It's fine, throw the stone like you're discarding it using both your hands."
"Yes--Ah, I hit it."
"Yep, you did well. You're great."

Make things easier by removing the impossible condition. 4 more stones hit the Shield, but its HP isn't decreasing. So it really invalidates damage up to certain extent.

◇

Unfortunately, it's not like I've became able to chant.
As for the chant earlier, even though I read the words properly, the rhythm was all over the place.

I activated Musical Performance skill and tried to chant in high spirit, but it

was no good. "Uu~n, it's better than before, but it's wrong. Be like Nadami-chan, a good musician who doesn't need to read the sheet.", so said Arisa. It's really frustating.

The trick for solving the puzzle is the [Shield] scroll that I got from the magic shop.
After we left the town, when I used it during our first rest, [Shield] was added on the Magic column in the Menu. At that time, I also got unlabeled [Magic Art] skill, but I wonder if [Magic Art: Foreign World] is a special case?
The magic that I used earlier was selected from the Menu. The chanting was a camouflage, that said, I also slightly wanted to pretend myself being able to chant magic.

Of course, Arisa found out that I wasn't able to chant properly, but since she knew about Menu, it probably was no problem.

Mia seemed unconcerned about it, so there was no problem.

However, the inspection continues.
Next is Nana's turn. Her MP has only decreased by 20% so she should be fine. I'll refill it when this is over.

"Nana, please put up Shield."
"Yes, master."

In front of Nana, a magic-made Shield appears. It looks just like the one I've created.

"Then Arisa, shoot a Psycho Ball at an angle where it wouldn't hit Nana at the Shield."
"Okay."

The Psycho Ball is repelled by the Shield and disappears, just like it was with me.
However, the Shield's HP has decreased by half. Although I don't know the exact value, the Shield's HP amount and hardness are probably different. It probably because of differences in level or skill level.

◇

"Alright, the experiment is over~ let's eat!"

Since the experiment took quite a bit of time, I also participated in the cooking along with Liza and Lulu to help. Moreover, I'm in charge of the main dish, steaks made of wolf meat.
I prepare the wolf meat in turns for the shares of several people excluding Mia and Nana. With Liza's advice, I cut a line on the tendon with a knife and mix salt and pepper in it.
Then, I put oil in the frying pan, stir it, and put sliced garlic inside the oil to let it fry as small dishes. While listening to the sound of oil, I quickly roast the meat. Besides Arisa and Lulu's shares, the meat are to be rare. It seems Arisa and Lulu prefer medium.

For mia's plate, I cut three different kind of fruits and dress it with honey and green sugar.
For Nana's water, I put several drops of fruits juice from Mia's fruits. I want to have a meal together with Nana quickly.

We begin eating with, "Itadakimasu", like always, but it feels more intense than usual. How do I say it, Single-minded, perfectly illustrates their eating.

"Another please!"

Arisa sticks out her steak plate while saying so. Pochi who has finished eating licks the plate, and looks dumbfounded for a while, then she presents her plate, "A, a, another please! nano desu!", she urgently says so.

"Another please!"
"Another please desu!"
"Umm, I also want another serving please."

Slightly late after Pochi, Tama and Liza also present their plates, and ask for another serving. Seemingly following them, Lulu also reservedly ask for another serving.

Well, the meat is still plentiful, but if you eat too much it'll be hard to move you know?

But, it's not over yet.

"Another please."
"Master, another please."

Over there are the figures of Mia and Nana who hold out the empty fruit plate and glass.
I don't have the courage to refuse anymore, and give another serving for everyone.
When I handed it over, I didn't forget to warn that this is the last one.

When they've finished eating, they look supremely blissful, but please stop looking at the plate so eagerly.
It'll be okay if it was Pochi and Tama, but everyone has the same manner, I almost want to ask if they're making jokes.

Afterwards, I was demanded to cook in every meal, but I asked them to only let me do it for lunch.
Since you'll get fat if you eat too much at night.

>Title [Magician of Dining Table] Acquired.

6-8. Fashion Show

Satou's here. If I find one G, there would be 30 more, so I always spray insecticide around and round up the whole herds.
<TLN: G=Gokiburi=Cockroach. He wrote the 'G' in alphabet>
It would be good if you could do the same with thieves...

◇

After we left the town, it was peaceful for three days, but for two days after that, we were attacked by thieves three times.

Since they were just small scale thieves with 7-8 people, we had Arisa did preemptive attack with Shock Wave, and the beastkin girls to defeat the thieves.

At the first battle, Mia attacked with Acid Mist, but it was too gruesome so I made her use Blind Mist and Mustard Mist on the next time instead.
If I fight right away, I could make short work of them, but since it looked sufficient with just the beastkin girls fighting, I was just standing by while watching them and being ready to cover them anytime if needed. And since the beastkin girls had the advantage of level and fighting experience compared to the thieves, my turn never come up.

We didn't bring the thieves to where people lives after we learned the lesson from the last time. We made them sleep with Arisa's magic, stripped them from all their equipments besides their clothes and leave them tied with ivy rope. If their equipments are taken away, they probably won't be able to continue their thief business. If they tried to force their way, they would get killed instead at best.
I teared off their outer clothes and bandaged them so they wouldn't bleed to death. The earl territorial cavalry who are going on patrol would come across them in several hours, I'm keeping them alive for that sake.

Just in case, I put a paper written with "Thieves" on them.

"We're not getting into the template situation eh~."
"Templa~?"
"Is that delicious nodesu?"

After the second encounter with thieves today, Arisa's mood turns bad. While grumbling, "I'd like to eat Tempura~", after hearing Pochi's word, she's lazing around on the wagon's floor.

"What kind of template?"
"Usually, shouldn't the theory be the thieves attack carriage with beautiful women or rich man and we come to save them while looking cool?"

I don't know that kind of theory.

"Arisa."
"What is it? Mia."
"Rich man."

Mia points at me while saying so.

"Beautiful women."

Mia points at the girls.

"A blind spot! We are the people who should be saved according to the template!"

Arisa groans while holding her head. Mia looks satisfied after looking at that reaction. She looks expressionless like always, but when I look closer, her mouth is slightly smiling.
Pochi, Tama and even Nana mimic Arisa by holding their head while looking troubled. Nana looks awkward, but let's leave her alone.

◇

"Master, it's the blue men."

Responding to Lulu who's calling me, I go outside to the driver seat. What Lulu means with, "Blue men", are the earl's territorial soldiers. Seems she calls them that since their clothes are all blue.

"We're the knights of Kuhanou-dono, bring me your representative."
"I'm the representative, my name is Satou."
"Hoo, you're young. This highways is often frequented by thieves. It's dangerous to travel without escorts. Go back to the town, and hire some guards."
"Thank you for your concern. We have excellent bodyguards, so it's fine."

I open the wagon's curtain and Liza shows her face.
Liza, please stop that carnivorous smile, it's scary.

"Fumu, quite strong looking escort you have. But, you should keep your escorts outside the wagon so they could see if any thief comes."

After giving that advice, the knights asks for my ID and returns to their patrol after looking satisfied.

◇

"Jaa~an, am I cute?"

Arisa spins around in front of me while saying so. She's looking cute while wearing one piece arranged with frills on its sleeves. When she's wearing that and coupled with her violet hair, she really looks like a character from a fantasy movie.

"Yup, you're cute."
"Ehehehehe~."

She probably has not thought that she would be honestly get praised, she looks surprised and then becomes bashful while looking happy. That feels slightly fresh.

"Cute~?""Look~ nano desu."

Pochi and Tama appears with the similar clothes as Arisa while asking. They spin around like Arisa.

"Pochi and Tama are cute too."
"Wa~i.""Yay~ desu."

It looks like they find the floating skirt fun, they spin around until they become dizzy

"Since you've bought some fabric in the town, I tried adding frills on the clothes we have."
"You're quite skillful."
"I'm experienced with making clothes myself for some events back then~"

It's better not to ask what kind of events are those. She's decided on her pose.
Arisa who's looking proud, suddenly freezes. Nana is posing when I look behind.

"Master, am I cute?"

Cute, or rather, a sight for sore eyes.

"Nana! Wear some clothes, clothes!"

Lulu picks clothes that Nana has left on the ground and cover her with it. She wears drawers like everyone on her lower-half part, but upper-half has brassiere. They're sewed half-cups. I didn't see anyone selling them in the city, so it was probably something Arisa made.

"Arisa, you're really skillful."
"W, well yeah."

It seems Arisa is weak with getting praised.

"Master, am I cute?"

"You're cute, or rather, sexy. Nana, don't thoughtlessly take off your clothes in front of an opposite sex."
"Yes, master."

I tried as hard as possible to say that calmly. Thanks to Poker Face skill which I've leveled up to expert level, I've succeed on not leaking excitement in my voice.
Nana seems to be satisfied with, "Sexy", comment and obediently wear the clothes that Lulu gives her.
If Lulu didn't react, I would probably fixedly stare at her without moving. If the two of us were alone, it could be dangerous. That's why, I should not hold grudge with Lulu's fast reaction. Though, it would have been nice if she were slightly slower...

"Did you only make clothes for three people?"

To keep up my appearance, I talk to Arisa getting back to the topic.

"Yup, it's impossible to make ones for everyone at once. Since Tama and Pochi were looking at my prototype with gleaming eyes, I made for them first."
"Next, for me."
"Yes, yes, the next one is for Mia. Lulu and Liza will be after that, it's fine right?"
"Yes, it's fine."
"I wouldn't look good with such fancy clothes."
"It'll look good I say. Right, should I add frills on your apron? You'll look like a young wife~."

It's rare to see girl's talk happen. It relaxes me.
While listening to the voices as background, I go back preparing lunch. My repertoire has increased after Liza teaches me. You'd get bored of the wolf meat steak no matter how delicious it is if you eat it everyday.

"Carefully scoop it after the lye comes out. Since it'd be wasteful to throw away the soup, please use this cloth to filter it into the the container and put it into the pot."

I thought that you would just cut the ingredients properly, but it's

unexpectedly labor-intensive.

Thanks to Liza's teaching, the result tastes quite good.
I've asked Lulu to make steak in place of me, but losing to the appealing looks of Pochi and Tama during the meal, I decide to make the steak later.

Okay, let's check the effectiveness of education skill by teaching Lulu the secret of grilling steak on the next lunch.

◇

"Satisfied~?"
"It was delicious nodesu~."
"Haa, blissful."

The three are lazing around, while I'm compounding beside them. Recently, Nana and Mia have been helping with the clean-up, so they're not around.

I crush a magic core with my fingers, and put it inside the mortar. Normally, you need nutcracker-like tool to crush it, but this tool is really not user-friendly, so I don't like to use it. Nowadays, I crush cores with fingers in secret.
I thoroughly grind it with the pestle and put it inside a bottle. I sort them inside bottles of various shapes and colors reflecting the effective ranks of the magic cores. I didn't forget to put labels on them too.

Since the magic shop girl has said that even in powder form the magic cores are unstable, I'll try to test how unstable they are.

I put an ear pick worth of powder on top of a wood plank and load it with magic power. Just when I load 1 point of magic power to it, "Pon", it explodes. The three centimeters thick of plank is perforated until the bottom.
Pochi and Tama who were dozing off jumped up and looked over here blankly. Arisa reproaches me with her sight. "I'm sorry for surprising you.", I said and went back to the experiment.

Still, I think it's more powerful than gun powder even with the same amount. Though, the only gun powder I know is from fireworks or firecrackers, so my comparison might be flawed.

Certainly, a normal person would die if one of this explodes.

I put a red powder made from magic core on a plate and mix it with stabilizer. Since the stabilizer is white, it becomes sakura-colored.

I put a small cut of paper on top of a magic bestowing stand, and then put about 1 gram of the mixture powder on top of it. I operate regulator at the edge of the magic bestowing stand, and set it according to the textbook. After this, I just need to put magic power to the magic bestowing stand. The reagent is complete in about ten seconds for each. Seen from AR, it's Reagent 1(+5). I wrap the completed reagent with paper like origami as instructed in the textbook, and then put it inside a small bag. I'll put them in the Storage after I've gathered enough.

Since I've gotten the knack, I put 10 grams on my second try and continue on.
I stop after making 100 reagents in 10 minutes.
Next I use those reagents to make recovery potions of magic power, health, stamina, 10 of them each. Since I could make five at once, and I've made other materials besides the reagents beforehand, it doesn't take long to finish.

"Arisa, put these away. Use it whenever you need."
"Ho～i"

I put half of them inside Arisa's item box.

Pochi and Tama who see me tidying the imbuing tools begin to prepare the wagon.
It's Liza's turn to be the coachman this afternoon.

Since there doesn't seem to be any thieves or beasts that are going to attack the wagon, I guess I'll re-investigate the method to make scrolls.

At the time when I got [Shield] magic in my magic column, I immediately

searched for the scroll creation method inside the magic books, but I couldn't find it.
I had not only searched in the magic books from Seryuu city, but also the books from Arisa, Zen and Trazayuya, but I still couldn't find it.
When I changed the search words, I did find ways to create magic tools and golem but, there's nothing about magic scrolls.

The next day after that, I always read through magic books looking for hints of magic scrolls creation. There is absolutely no clue so far, but I've became knowledgeable in type of chanting and magic theory.

Of course, I also have interest with magic tools and golem, but since they need large-scale facilities, it's unreachable for now. There are recipes for magic tools with simple structures, so I'll challenge myself by trying making that on the next break.

I'd like to quickly increase my repertoires, not only for cooking but also magic.

6-9. People of Baron Muno Territory (1)

Satous's here. It's hard to work under an incompetent superior. Though, the superior might be thinking the opposite...
If it was just a job then you could just change your workplace, but the territory people could not do that.

◇

We've just entered the territory of baron Muno, so I perform [All Map Exploration] like usual.

It seems that there's a soldier garrison on the pass slightly ahead. There are 20 soldiers around with level ranging on 3-7. Coming out of that place is a flat terrain with sporadically situated small mountains and forests. The area is wider than Kuhanou's earldom. However, the whole population is only around 40000, about 1/3th of Seryuu city.

There is only one big city in the baron's territory, while the rest are just small villages with less than 1000 people each. The town where the baron lives is populated with 20000 people and seems to be called Muno city.

In that Muno city, there's a demon. Level 30. Hiding in the city means it's probably doing something fishy. Since it looks troublesome, I would stay as far away as possible from it.
But, didn't Arisa say that demons which had crossed worlds are executive class? I don't think that it's an executive with this level. I wonder if demons could be born in this world?

Next, I examine monsters in this territory. There is no low level monsters, on the other hand, there are several monsters past level 10 in various place. Even nearby, there's a level 24 monster called War Mantis lurking.

Furthermore, there are also something peculiar, although they're not monsters, in a forest near Munoo city--a 30 kilometers diameter wide, with

20 kilometers at the shortest, huge forest--there are wood giants in the interior. Although there are only 10 wood giants, the strongest one is at level 39. Their levels averaged at 30.

Another notable thing is that there are a lot of thieves. Although I've expected this, most of them are grouped in 10-30 people. The biggest group has around 200 people. It seems that they build their base on the outer edge of the forest where the wood giants live.

Since there are a lot of outlaws, this probably means the public order of this territory is quite bad.

I'd like to take a detour out of this baron's territory, but that means we'd need to circle around to the royal capital, and if we take longer detour, then we'd have to get to duke Oyugock's territory. It'd take roughly two months. Furthermore, according to the traveler's journal, if we get caught in the winter, we wouldn't be able to move until spring.

◇

"Good afternoon, soldier-san, are you not feeling well?"
"Faa, it's nothing, I don't feel like moving today."
"Is that so, thanks for your hard work."
"Umu, you can go through."

The soldier said so while lazily sitting down in front of the military post, and let the wagon through without inspecting it.
His clothes is slovenly worn too, an uninformed person would likely mistakes him with bandit, but he properly belongs to the baron Muno army.

"Hehehe~ Ennui Field is quite usable right~."
"Yeah, we're saved."

Arisa proudly said so while leaning on the driver seat of the wagon which had started running. How long are you going to put the stamina recovery potion bottle on your mouth, that's bad manner you know?

The soldier before was that languid because Arisa casted magic to make the entire garrison's soldiers became tired. Although, since it was morning, there was a high possibility he would be like that anyway even if we didn't use magic.

There's a reason why we deliberately used magic.

From the result of my prior investigation, the soldiers in that garrison had things like [Murder], or [Rape] in their Reward and Punishment, just like thieves. I understand that they're people who do as they like.

I neutralized them in advance rather than getting tangled in counterattack. If possible I wanted them to not realize that they were attacked with magic. That was my plan, so Arisa used Over Boost, coupled with Ennui Field from afar to make the soldiers became languid.

If they had magic detection item then it could be a problem, but it looked more troublesome if we got entangled with those guys, so I picked the relatively low risk method.

It might be problematic if we leave bad guys like them alone, but since the War Mantis is closing in the garrison, their fate is probably already sealed.

I confirm Arisa's status just in case, but her Reward and Punishment hasn't changed.

◇

Afternoon on the same day, when we're passing through a road near a village populated with 300 people, we're called by a man on the side of the road. There are three thin teenage girls beside him. Their faces are quite alright, but since they look fatigued and disheartened, they don't look their ages.

"Sir, won't you buy these girls?"
"I'm sorry, but I don't need slaves."

"Each of them is just 1 silver coin, if you bring them to a big city they would sell well."

The man is promoting with listless voice.
He probably knew that ones would need to pay tax if they want to bring slaves outside the territory.

"Only if there's no tax, furthermore, I don't deal in slave trading."
"Is that so, then, how about becoming your attendants, for 2 big copper coins."

That's cheap.
I won't buy them though.

"I'm sorry, but they're not comparable."

I point at Arisa and Nana who've showed their face after hearing word, 'attendants'. Although they wear hoods, their good looks should be evident.
After the man saw them, he gave up.

"That so, I'm sorry for taking your time."
"I'd like to talk for a bit."
"What is it?"
"Did your village fall into poverty because of bad harvest?"
"It's not that, it was certainly smaller than usual, but we didn't have bad harvest."

Then, was the tax too high?
If the situation continue and they keep selling humans like this, won't the workers gradually run out and the village disappear?

"Even if the tax is high, we could still barely last through winter with the little crops we have."

Is there some kind of unplanned expenditure.

"Was it because of thieves?"
"They're former farmers, we won't be careless enough to let our winter saving get stolen."

The farmers would fight back to death huh.

"Then, did some monsters appear?"
"If that happen then we'd give up. It was congratulatory gift for the baron's daughter wedding, we had to give 30% of our winter saving."

The man exhales heavily while saying so.
This baron is terrible. Although it might be an arbitrary act of the tax collector official.

"Did you not send petition?"
"If we do that, the whole village would end up as serfs."
"That can't be."
"It's true, do you know Tonza village? Everyone in that village was forced to become a serf, there's no one who lives in that village anymore."

For a moment, I thought that he was talking about Oyu village but when I checked the map, there was a place called Oyu village around 20 kilometers from here.
Certainly, there is no village called Tonza, but there's place called [Ruin of Tonza Village]. Is the baron here a tyrant on top of being a fool?

Since I feel a bit curious, I passingly ask.

"Do you know the partner for the baron's daughter wedding?"
"According to the story of the tax collector, it's the hero-sama."

Hero?
I've searched through the territory, but there is no one who have hero title.

The man who seemingly accept my silence talks as if making an excuse.

"It might be an impostor, but the tax collector really said that. You could ask the village head if you want."
"If she's really marrying the real hero, why would they torment the people?"
"Hah, a lower class man who's nothing but a tax tool like me wouldn't know how the big-shots think."

I can't deny that.

However, if he's really the same hero, [A straightforward altruistic fool], like Arisa has said, then we could just ask about the daughter to resolve this question. If I'm not mistaken, that hero has weird preference right.

"I have one more question, how old is the daughter?"
"I'm sure they're 19 and 24 years old women."
"I see, thank you. It's trifling, but here's a compensation for the talk."

I said so while pushing several silver coins to the man and went away with the wagon.

◇

Arisa comes out to the coachman's seat.

"Hey, you seem to have noticed it."
"Yeah, it's an impostor."

Yes, the hero that Arisa has told me, Hayato Masaki, has awkward fetish.
He's a lolicon.
I don't think a man like that would take a 19 or 24 years old woman into his wife.
He might have a change of heart, but then he would be swayed with his beautiful women attendants instead.

"The pervert might has been cured, but that Saga Empire won't make a blunder like letting him marry with a small-time noble from some foreign land."

A shotacon like you probably doesn't have the right to call lolicon a pervert.

Just in case, I try narrowing the search term on the map to check if there's any other hero besides Hayato Masaki.

A person with [Hero] title--Does not exist.
A person with [Unknown] skill--Does not exist.
A person with [Self Status] skill--Does not exist.
A person higher than level 50--Does not exist.

There's no applicable person besides us.
There's no one who could possibly be a reincarnated or transported person either.

There's a fake hero, or there's a hero from another country inside this territory, I wonder which one is it.
I'm guessing that it's a fake hero. I can't help but feel that the demon in Muno city is the one behind this.

However, I don't intend to get involved.
It may be heartless, but I don't want to expose our girls with danger if I try to eliminate the demon and the fake hero.

I decide to circulate anonymous documents if I get a guilty conscience.

6-10. Magic Circuit and Rose Engraving

Satou's here. I've made various electronic circuit boards when I was a college student, although I neglected it when I became a working adult.
I didn't think that I would make them in fantasy world...

◇

I don't know if the fake hero really exist, but when I regularly check the baron castle's map, I've narrowed down the most suspicious candidate.
The fake hero's name is Hauto--one character difference with the hero, Hayato Masaki--he's a level 7 young man with one-handed sword and shield skills.
There are also other people who seem to be his companions which are a level 10 swordsman, a level 8 magician, and a level 9 priest. It's a party with good balance, they would've been successful if they earn their shares from labyrinths.

The demon is most likely involved. It's often near the fake hero, Hauto. However, this demon slips out of the castle at night, and goes to the neighboring forest where the thieves are.

"Master, the replenishment is complete."

Damn, I've wasted this blissful morning time thinking unnecessary things.
Nana who has refilled her magic fix her clothes.

Satou, you'll get another chance on the next break.

...I convinced myself so.

◇

Today I'm making wooden swords on the shaking wagon.
I feel like Pochi's and Tama's battle forms have become sloppy lately, probably because the thieves' level were low, so I'm preparing these for their exercise. I don't want to see them suffer from letting their guard down.

I roll several layers of leather on the wooden swords for safety so they wouldn't get hurt.

"Is it okay to have this~?"
"Pochi also wants to have that nodesu."

Pochi and Tama said so while holding Nana's rapier. The sword is engraved with cute patterns from the guard to the grip. It seem they want to have the wooden swords to have the same kind of patterns as the rose engraving there. These two unexpectedly like cute things.

Do I have to make this?
The two's eyes are full of expectations.

"Is it alright if the design is a bit simpler?"
"This one no good~?"
"No good nano desu?"

Uuh, now it's upturned eyes huh.

"I understand, I'll try it for once."
"Yay~."
"It's going to be okay since it's master, nano desu."
"Work hard~ master."

Arisa cheered on me who had irresponsibly promised them. Dang Arisa, don't look so amused.
Since it's impossible to engrave the design on the completed swords, I decide to shave new ones.

Afterwards, the two are finally satisfied with the engraving after nine tries. Since I've only shaved the guard to the grip part, the blade part is still rod shaped. I should be able to shave the blade parts before the next rest if it's

only for two.

>[Engraving Skill Acquired]

◇

"There's no prey nodesu."
"I picked nuts~."

After we've entered this territory, Pochi and the girls only net few hunts. Birds or beasts that could be hunted are scarce along the road. Even with this condition, Tama still shrewdly gather fruits and acorns. In some survival manga, they would cook acorns or insects, but since we're not in food shortage, I keep Tama's harvest for now.

Now then, it's about time to prepare for lunch. Lulu is beside me while wearing different clothes than the usual. She ties her hair with the blue braid like yesterday, but her apron now has frills making her cuteness goes up by 50%.

"I've prepared it."
"Alright, then, put the oil on the frying pan and raise the flame."
"Yes!"

I'm teaching Lulu the secret of steak today. I wonder if she's nervous, she makes a lot of excessive movements. Her face has turned bright red.

"The garlic is enough with that much. Put it on this plate."

Going according to the instruction, Lulu awkwardly use the spatula to move it to the plate. The spatula is made from wood. Since it was inconvenient when I'm making steak without one, I made it myself.

"Listen closely to the sound. Don't close your eyes though."

Lulu performs my instruction, but it seems that she's nervous because our faces are close. It looks like she's not used around men, so I give

instructions from behind her shoulders.

"When you hear this sound, it means that the heat is enough, so put the steak in."

Even though she's tense, she's doing it properly, excellent.

"Wait until the the side becomes brown. Turn the steak when you smell this. It's easy to understand when to turn if you utilize the sound and the smell."

I said so with air of superiority, but it was thanks to the skill.

When Lulu has finished grilling the steak, I cut and sample it. Yep, it's a bit inferior compared to the one I make, but it's at the level where she could charge money for it. Lulu also tries it, she's surprised with the meat she has grilled herself.
Since Pochi and Tama are drolling beside us, I cut the meat and feed it to their mouths. And since even Liza and Arisa wait for their turns, the trial steak quickly disappears. You girls have too much appetite.

◇

At a slightly remote place, Pochi and Tama are training using the wooden swords.

Without their usual goofy attitudes, they look very serious.
Pochi attacks in straight line, Tama avoids it while moving relatively more erratic. Using the chance when Pochi stops moving, Tama successfully hits her with small attack.
Sometimes Tama fails to avoid Pochi's heavy blow, so the damage is comparable.

Still, even though this is a training, aren't they way too serious?
Liza who was washing the dishes volunteered to be the umpire since she was worried with the two.

Even though I've taught them to stop before they hit before the training

began, looks like they completely forget about it. Let's tell them again later.

◇

After the meal, I'm taking a break from chanting practice.

Today, I'm experimenting in magic tools creation. What I'm doing now is making preliminary preparations.

Roughly speaking, Magic tools are tools for recreating effects of specific magic without chanting. Magic circuits are embedded on magic tools as a substitute for the chants. For simple circuits, you could make them without special facility, but you'd need exclusive workshop if you want to make magic tools with complex circuits. It might be easier to understand if I say that it's like the differences between [Miniature bulb and copper-wired battery], and [Electronic circuit with semiconductor].

In order to compose the magic circuit, you need to use circuit liquid to draw specific patterns. Depending on the purpose, you could possibly need circuit liquids with different magic resistance power, but let's go with the orthodox for the first time.

I draw a circle on a wood plank with ink.

Next, I use a pick to lightly carve out the circle.

Then I just need to pour the circuit liquid here and it'd be complete.

I want to make the circuit liquid, but it was written in difficult elf language, it's probably by Trazayuya. It can't be helped, I maximize the elf language skill. I'd have liked if it was written in simpler elf language.

For the making of this circuit liquid this time, you just need to simply mix melted copper with powdered magic core and stabilizer.

First, I melt some coppers. For this I use the magic tool that I've bought from the metal carving workshop. It's a burner where you can raise flame

by pouring magic. Burning without fuel, truly a magic tool.

>[Metal Carving Skill Acquired]

Since it looks like I would need this from now on, I put points and activate it.

I mix some powdered magic cores and stabilizers inside the pot where the melted copper is.
With light plopping sound, red smoke lightly rises from the pot. It has no smell.

Next, let's pour the circuit liquid into the wood carving. I smell burning woods when I pour the circuit liquid.
Maybe I should have waited until it's a bit cooler.

>[Magic Tools Creation Skill Acquired]

So imbuing was from different category.
Of course I activate it.

"What are you making~."

Arisa who has finished washing the dishes calls me from behind my shoulders.

"A magic tool."
"Eh? Is that something that you could make yourself?"
"Seems so, do you want to try it?"
"Is it fine?"

Arisa pours her magic power, the brown circuit liquid begins to glow vermilion gold.

"Okay, it's good already."
"And, what will happen next?"
"When you put magic power into the circuit liquid, the magic power will flow on it."
"Yep, yep, then?"

"That's it, the magic power goes around, the end."
"Ehh~~~."
"Don't expect grandiose thing from a first timer in magic tools making."

Arisa looks very dissatisfied.
In the first place, I can't make anything else beside circle poured with circuit liquid without special facility, you're expecting too much.

6-11. People of Baron Muno Territory (2)

Satou's here. There were some TV programs about survival in uninhabited island or deep in a forest, but I would refuse if I was asked to participate. I'd eat through all the the nuts and edible plants in a matter of weeks.

◇

"Master, there's someone ahead nodesu."
"There~."

Pochi who's occupying my lap finds traces of someone ahead. I've confirmed it on the map, but I can't see it yet.

"Ah, it went inside the forest."

It seems scout-kun had gone to call its friends.
They're thieves, but this time it's a bit different. They're children ranging from 9 to 14 years old. There are three boys and six girls. Their Reward and Punishments are just [Contract Breach]. Since their titles are [Runaway Slave], they're probably children who have ran away from villages. Their stamina are all less than half.

Indeed, it'd be pitiful to beat them up right?

"What's on there?"
"Group of boys thieves."
"What's that, I'm burning up!"

I consult to Arisa and Liza about their reward and punishment.

"Runaway slaves is it? Then, our reward and punishment won't change even if we kill them, so I think there's no need to worry."

No, Liza-san, I don't have such worry.

"How about ignoring and going through them? Or do you want to get more little girls?"

This is enough, I'll pass on getting more.

"Right huh, runaway slaves probably don't have projectile weapons, let's shake them off."

...It was no good.

◇

Three girls are laying on the road, blocking it. We can't exactly run them over right?
The wagon barely stopped in time just before hitting them, but the girls didn't move even after that. Since they were not tied, their body might had been frozen in fear. They're too reckless even if they want to stop the wagon no matter what.

"Don't move! We have ten archers aiming at you in the forest."

Strange voice with raised pitch threatened us.
Since it's troublesome to play along with the bluff, I'll put aside the girls and quickly advance the wagon.
I leave the wagon's back entrance to Pochi and Tama to guard, and the driver's seat to Liza.

"If you value your life, leave your food here."

He's making demand with utmost effort, but the back chorus isn't helping.

"I'd like some potatoes."
"Stupid, we have to demand dried meat here! Right?"
"I want to eat bread."
"Anything's good as long as it's not weeds."
"Stupid, you guys keep silent."

"You're the stupid one calling other stupid you know?"
"Just shut your mouth."

The demands became chattering of young children, ruining everything.
I seize one of the small girl who's blocking the road, and gently toss her to the other children in the forest. She's abnormally light. The children who are thrown at are panicking while catching her.

"Uwah, what are you doing!"
"We'd shoot you with arrow."

No one is coming out of the forest.
Do they not have weapons or are they afraid of Liza?

"Do you want to walk to the forest yourself, or get thrown there?"
"J, just run me over. If we don't have food, we'll die starving anyway."

She insists with trembling voice, I'm not sure if she's bluffing or being serious.
She's the same age as Lulu, but she looks as old as Arisa. She's a girl with semi-long red hair and red brown pupils. The arm which I grab to make her stand is thin like a dead branch.

"L, let go of Totona!"

The boy who has been negotiating with us since now comes out of the forest after seeing me grabbing the girl's arm. The red-haired boy looks similar with the girl. He's holding a club on his hand.
I force the girl to stand, and push her toward the boy. The girl stumbles and is caught by the boy.

"Liza, go."

I jump to the driver seat of the wagon which has started running.

"Okay, here."

Arisa holds out a big bag while saying so, and throws that to the forest. The content of that bag is vegetables and food that Tama has gathered like

fruits. Since it wasn't prepared in advance, she probably did it when she heard the boys' conversation.

"You're probably thinking that even if I give them food, it won't solve the root of the problem right? When you're starving, you don't think of tomorrow. The most important thing is to quell the starving right now. Just that."

◇

"Is it still bothering you?"
"No, it's not that."

It didn't bother me at all. After taking two deep breaths, the queasy feeling on my stomach completely disappears.
What I have in mind is the things ahead. There's a narrow river ahead of this road, and five old people are there.
They're neither thieves or runaway slaves. Are they fishing?

"Don't think unnecessary things when you're hungry! Let's eat a lot of delicious steaks and cheer up!"
"Cheer~?"
"Eat until full nodesu."

I'm thankful for your worry, but you girls are absolutely thinking about the steak more right?

We've arrived at the creek after a while.
The elderly are just sitting on the bank and staring at the river. I'm thinking of camping near the river, but what do I do about this.

"Good afternoon, the weather is nice today huh."
"Oh, are you a merchant, do you have some businesses with this old man?"
"I'm sorry for disturbing you. When I was stopping by the river to get some water, I saw your figures, so I thought of greeting everyone here."
"That is, quite polite of you. Just think of me like a pebble on the roadside."
"That's right, we don't have anything to do beside staring at the river in

sorrow until we're called by the god."
<TLN: He/she means dying>
"It's preferable to be called by the god here rather than have our grandchildren be sold."
"We're not welcomed in the village even if we go back."
"If you want to give us foods, I'll accept it anytime you know?"
"Hey, if you eat now, you'll get called by the god late."
"That's right huh."

It seems that they're abandoned here on this river.
You should treasure the elders!

"Don't make such face, it's fine."
"That's right, for the sake of decreasing the mouths needed to be feed, we got out of the village by our own volition."
"Right, if the old people are decreased, girls who sell themselves would probably decrease too."
"Nowadays, merchants weren't buying slaves and the village headman was grumbling."

Since there's no one who would buy their daughters, they sacrifice the elderly now huh.

◇

Since the old people seem to be harmless, I decide to camp slightly away from them. We're located downwind from where they are.
Usually, Pochi and Tama hunt and gather food, Arisa and Mia collect firewoods, Lulu and Liza cook, and Nana helps them cook, but since the old people would likely die faster if we scrouge the plants and animals on this area, I decide to refrain.

"We're not going to look for firewoods or preys today. Liza, I'm sorry, but since I want to treat the old people with foods, I want you to cook more today, I leave you with the food choice."
"I understand, since heavy stuff is impossible for people who're fasting, let's make cereal porridge."

"Need help?"
"We have enough hands, but let's teach you on this occasion! It's not only Mia, Arisa, you too."

Lulu readily accepts Mia's offer, and takes Arisa by hand to the place where the cookwares lay. Arisa resists by saying, "Cooking is my bane~.", but today Lulu is forceful and she keeps pulling her.
Pochi and Tama look around restlessly, so I tell them, "You girls can go ahead and play", but somehow it has became a battle training. Moreover, it's me versus Pochi and Tama.

After the signal, Pochi rushes forward like an arrow.

I smoothly avoid the wooden sword's thrust.

Using that chance, Tama sweeps my feet with her wooden sword, I avoid it by jumping.

I counter by lightly kick Tama's wooden sword.

Tama who loses her wooden sword jumps at me while making small growl.

I change her trajectory by scooping her stomach with my palm, and gently throw her away.

While eluding Pochi's attack twice, I confirm Tama has landed after spinning on the air from the edge of my vision.

"Can't hit~?"
"Strong nodesu."

The training continues while being like that, and when I purposely get myself caught at the end, it somehow looks like we're flirting.

"I caught you, hamumunyanoresu."
<TLN: She's biting him.>
"Nihehe~ caught~?"

And then, the last punchline has to come from Arisa after all.

"I'll join in too~."

While saying so, Arisa jumps at me, but--

"Arisa~ Joining~."
"The next prey is Arisa nano desu!"

--Pochi and Tama brilliantly intercept her.

6-12. People of Baron Muno Territory (3)

Satou's here. Scene of people crying while eating their meal is a wartime or post-war time tale, but if I have to say, that only reminds me of the time when I'm consoling a broken-hearted friend who went into binge eating, Satou's.

◇

"Gramps, we got some foods."
"It's not weeds today~."

The children whom we meet in the afternoon come storming in when we're eating cereals, vegetables and wolf meat together with the old people. I've heard about these children from the old people, but since they don't know when they'll come back, we've started our meal ahead of them.

"Ah, it's the people from earlier."
"Did they come to get the food back?"
"They're waiting for us."

The children hide anxiously behind the leader's back.
Do these children not see the peaceful atmosphere of this meal?

"We have lots of porridge, why don't you eat with us?"
"That's right, you children eat too."
"Hey now, quickly sit down kids."

The children are cautious with my invitation, but since the gramps are also calling them, and above all, they're captivated with the presented porridge, before long they've joined the meal with us.

"T, tasty."
"It's not weeds?"
"Uwah, there's something smelling nice."

"There are boiled meat here."
"You're lying?"
"It's true, it's meat~."
"Really delicious.... Uuuu"

It's good that you're delighted, but please stop being moved to tears.

Pochi who has finished her plate the fastest starts the war with few words.

"Another please~ nano desu!"

With those few words, the tension is raised on the children.
Probably only feeling that tension subtly, or maybe none at all, the always expressionless Nana asks for another serving.

"You kids don't need to be reserved. Go eat more."
"We still have a lot, so if you want another helping, you can ask without reserve."

They're cheering after hearing Arisa's words, leaving my words unfinished.
The children's eating speed becomes faster. The old people scold the boys who choke their food, "Chew your food well."

Since it looks like the food will not be enough, I go back to the wagon to boil potatoes.
I peel about 20 potatoes and boil them together with Lulu who has came to help. Hearing rustling sounds, I see to the side to find Mia.

"Satou."
"You also want another helping, Mia?"

Mia shakes her head lightly.

"Humans... why."

She tries hard to put words together.

"Throwing away... children... elders?"

When I ask her in detail, seems that the elves cherish their children and elders, so she's shocked with this situation.
Let's leave this kind of heavy topic to Arisa-sensei.

"Have you asked Arisa?"
"Nn."
"What did she say?"
"I don't understand. Things like the riches and the poor, or social structure."

Dang Arisa, don't use difficult words to muddle your way.

"Mia, races that produce a lot of children, not just humans, are fundamentally weak."
"Nn."
"Since they're weak they struggle hard, and will save oneself even at the expense of many."
"All of them?"
"Yep, since they can't all be saved, they let one section becomes sacrifice."
"...That so."

It's good if she's convinced with that, but I myself haven't put much thought in it. Even most of the talks from just before were nothing more than informations I got from net and TV.

"If someone like master becomes a king, it would be really peaceful."

Lulu says so while smiling, but she's overestimating me. If someone like me become a king, the whole country would immediately go bankrupt, the end.

◇

"Hou, I was wondering why she wore hood during the meal, she was an elf huh."

An old woman comes to here alone. Mia quickly cover herself with the hood even though it's too late.

"She's shy around people."
"Is that so, young lady, I won't tell others so please forgive me."
"Nn."

Mia nods, and lightly runs behind Lulu's back who's keeping the pot.

"Did I get myself hated?"
"She's just shy. Rather than that, is there anything wrong?"
"It's painful to only accept your kindness and eat, so I'm thinking if there's anything I can help."
"Since we've just began boiling more potatoes, we have enough hands."
"I thought that you were just about to tidy up, is it fine? I don't have anything to pay you back even after you treat us this much."
"It's just a simple whim of mine, please don't mind it."

The old woman looks lost for a moment, but as if she's decided on something, she continues her words.

"Merchant-san, won't you make those children your slaves?"
"I'm sorry old woman, I have enough slaves already, I don't need anymore than these."
"One or two of them is fine, please take them. If they're left alone here, they would die from starvation sooner or later. I don't mind if it's old bones like me, but it's painful to see the children pass away."

I'm sorry for the old woman, but I refuse.
To be frank, journeying in this world is too dangerous. If I need to protect just Lulu and Nana then I could do something about it, but if the people who need to be protected increase by the nine kids over there, I won't be able to.
To calm my heart, I put aside the food for a bit.

"It'd be good if the children could grow their own vegetables isn't it."
"That's right, it'd be nice if there's a field where we could grow vegetables."
"Is the ground around here not good?"
"The sun's exposure is good, but the soil is too brittle, so it's no good."

Mia is listening to Lulu's and the old woman's conversation without doing anything, but then she pulls my sleeve.

"What is it?"
"Forest."
"Yup, it's forest alright."

Seemingly annoyed with my reply, Mia pouts.

"No, humus."

What'd you say, you can use leaves from where rhinoceros beetles live

"They're good."
"Come to think of it, Arisa said something about that too."
"Is it about agricultural reform?"

Yes, that. If I'm not mistaken, she said that an outbreak of large quantity of insect monsters happened.

"Insect monsters?"
"Yep, Arisa said that large quantity of it were springing out when she tried it."
"No, superstition."
"Is that so."
"Lia said so."

Lia? Isn't she Mia's mother?

"In other words, we should clear the forest and cultivate farming land there?"
"Nn."
"That's nice, if we could do that, then the children and us would work hard on it."

The old woman is saying that but she doesn't look to be serious. If we have heavy machineries, then clearing the land wouldn't be hard at all, but of course there is no such thing. Even if we successfully cultivate the land, they could only harvest after 1 year while suffering during that period.

"Right, there are crops which could be harvested fast, but only Gabo could in this season. That one could be harvested in one month. Although, anyone

but the nobles in their manor is prohibited in cultivating plants, so we can't acquire the seeds."

The old woman has experience in cultivating Gabo fruit when she was forced to work in a manor.

"That thing can grow disgustingly fast. That's why it's classified as a weed."

They just need to have enough food until spring, is there really nothing we can do?

"If there's such method, we old bones wouldn't get thrown out of the village."
"I don't mind even if it's absurd."
"Right, then we could go hunt the spider bear in the forest. If we have just three spider bear bosses' meat and smoke them, we could live leisurely until spring."

It's a monster living deep in various places of this forest. There are 5 monsters with level around 24-28.

Still, is it a bear or a spider, be firm about it.
<TLN: In Japanese, bear is kuma, spider is kumo. The monster's name is Kumo Kuma lol.>

"Don't seriously think of going okay? I know that your slave girls are strong, but they won't win against the spider bear inside the forest. When I was a child, there was subjugation expedition with the knights, samurai and soldiers leading the way, no one came back."

Rather than the problem with fighting inside the forest, I think it's simply because of level difference.

"If little elf lady here grows up, with the forest magic from the fairy tale, she could move with ease along the large trees and help farm the land in the forest."
"Muu."

Mia is sulking after being treated as a child.

"Old woman, even though this girl looks like this, she's older than you."
"Oya oya, is that so. Elves sure have long life."

Mia's mood isn't recovering, but when the old woman blows leaf flute to soothe her, she looks interested on it.
Since Mia is also coming from forest, she has blown various leaves flutes there, so her musical timbre and power of expression are world apart from the old woman even though they use the same leaf. This might unexpectedly be the result of study in her long life.

Everyone gathered around Mia before I'm aware, but then Mia stops and the leading role changes to the potatoes. In the end, it was not enough with just potatoes, and we ended up cooking cereal and porridge once more.

6-13. People of Baron Muno Territory (4)

Satou's here. There's saying that there's a great difference between seeing and hearing, but I think there are a lot of things you don't know until you actually try for yourself, Satou.

◇

"U, umm, thank you for the delicious meal."
"You don't have to mind it, everyone has thanked me earlier too."
"Also umm, I'm sorry for the afternoon."

It's the red-haired girl from the afternoon. She's called Totono if I'm not mistaken. She's personally coming to our camping ground to meet me, does she have some business?

The girl is looking downcast, but after she glances a bit at Lulu, her face becomes determined.
She grasps her skirt with trembling hands, and seemingly decides something.

It can't be another, "Please buy me.", situation right.
To be frank, I'm fed up with that.

However, the girl's action is a bit different.
She takes her skirt off. I've said skirt, but her clothes is a one piece, so I could see her ribs--

--or I should be, but Lulu covers her with an apron in a hurry from behind, so I couldn't see it. Let's leave this as it is.
It doesn't seem like she'd wear her clothes back, but she also doesn't brush off the apron.

"T, this is an apology and thanks. We can't do anything, so..."
"You'd pay with your body?"

"Un, my big sister said, 'If you're given something, give something back.', she said that it's no good with just words..."

I don't think that person meant it like this when she said that.

"It's fine to return a thank you to wealthy people. Although I'd like it if you don't take it for granted."
"But"
"Your sister surely meant to say that when you've become a person who lives her life to the fullest, you should share something with other."
"I, is that how it is..."

Since she falls silent, Lulu helps her wear the clothes. I don't have any interest with little girl's body of course, so I avert my gaze.
After Totona has put her clothes on, Lulu invites her to drink a tea. Mia who should have been on watch duty with me is leaning on my back, sleeping. Sleeping even during this uproar, this girl is not fit to be on guard duty.

"Um, this is?"
"It's a blue tea."
"Is it fine to drink it?"
"It's delicious you know."

With Lulu's words, Totona concentrates on the cup while looking awfully surprised. Her cheeks loosens, I wonder if she finds it delicious.
I'm watching that scene while preparing Liza's spear.

"This the first time I've drank something like this."
"Maybe no one drinks it around here. It's master's favorite tea."

It's probably something that only wealthy people could enjoy considering this area.
This tea's name is [Blue Ruby], it's easy to drink like Darjeeling, although they're completely on different level. The tea lets out slightly bluish color when freshly brewed, but it looks like a normal tea when it's cool. I can't help but become curious with how it works.
Totona seems to have calmed down after she has finished drinking the tea.

Since it looks like she's going to try to sell herself this time, let's get ahead of

her.

"Totona, won't you lend me strong kids for helping me this morning?"
"Un, if we could thank you with that, everyone will go."
"I'm counting on you, I promise to give two big bags of potatoes to the elders. You guys also need it to survive right?"
"Un, un, thank you, Onii-san."

Totona is saying thank you while crying, Lulu wipes her tears.

Although, two big bag of potatoes are probably not enough for even half a month.
I don't have obligation or reason to help them further than this, but I'll try to do something without giving me trouble. That line of thinking is hypocritical huh.

◇

Right now, I'm away from the camping ground, deep in the forest.
At first, I've thought of hunting the spider bears for the children and elders, but I change my mind and check the forest's terrain.

The old woman said that a good place should be beside a river with a lot of humus and well-lit.
I use a holy sword taken out from storage to briskly cut the trees and put them inside the storage. Since the trees are cut down without any resistance, and I instantly put the fallen tree inside the storage, it doesn't feel real. I've cleared 300 meters wide area in 10 minutes.

I did it without lumbering skill somehow.

The outlook has became much better.

Next, I activate Cultivation skill I've acquired before.
I pull the stumps one by one, but this is quite difficult. I can pull the stump easily, but the reaction force makes my feet sink into the soft ground.
Therefore, I give up on pulling the stump, instead I cut away the root with

the holy sword after I raise it. This work took more time than I expected, around 1 hours.

Next, it's the removal of weeds and bushes. Since the weeds break apart when I pull them with all my strength, halfway through, I delicately control my power with difficulty. I got, [Gathering], skill when I was pulling the weeds. It seems that there are some herbs mixed in with the weeds I've pulled. Is this the difference (effect) of [Mowing] skill.

I'd have loved to use fire magic and shout, "Mow it down."[1]
<TLN: Nausicaa's reference, not sure what's the actual phrase used in the English release>

When I've finished removing the weeds, I pull the remaining tree roots. It feels strange like pulling string buried in the ground. This is also the same with the weeds, they break easily if I pull with force, so I have to control my power delicately.

I found some huge rocks and stones halfway through, I put them inside the storage. They'd become hindrances for the field.

Now then, I guess the land is good enough for cultivation?

I feel like I'm missing something, I wonder if this is an effect of Cultivation skill.
I haven't read much manga about cultivation.

Since I don't know what is it even if I stare at the ground, I take out a hoe from the abandoned village back then and try to plow the land.

"Hum~m, it's normal."

After plowing for 10 meter, I feel like hitting something hard.
There is a stone in the ground. The stone is about as big as a fist.
Afterward, I hit stones whenever I plow for a bit. The edge of the hoe becomes slightly bent.

I adjust the search range of the map and search for stones. First, let's display the ones in 30 cm deep underground. There's a lot of them. I

activate gathering skill to the maximum and begin gathering the stones. I gather the stones so fast that it's as if I'm in a gag manga. Sometimes things that look like gemstones or raw ores are mixed in, but they're probably just beautiful stones like the actinolite back then.

After I've roughly completed the removal of the stones, I try plowing the ground. Since I've only did this once when I was a child on my grandpa's countryside, I don't know if I'm doing this right. If I just make the ground soft enough, then the old men could probably direct the children well.

I pile up about 10% of the weeds that I've gathered at the edge of the farmland. It'll be usable for fertilizer.
I also clean off branches from 10 felled tress and pile them on three different locations. Then I cut them into 20 parts in easy to use sizes.
I wrap gabo fruits with cloth and put them below the timbers. It shouldn't get damaged by beasts like this.

"Fuh, it's tiring after all."

My stamina has been decreased by 20%. The stones removal was the most severe.

"Now then, I've reclaimed the land, but what should I do about it."

Yes, it'd look unnatural for workable fields to materialize in one night.
I'll leave this alone, and hope that the children would find the place when they're looking for food. Since it's only 2 kilometers away and near the river, I'm expecting them to find it.

At that time, a spider bear that the old woman were talking about during dinner comes out of the forest.

It's coming to get itself hunted, what a laudable monster.

◇

About this spider bear, it's a spider with the body portion looking like

bear's. To be frank, it's disgusting.

There are 5 spider bears which appear, I lure them back into the forest. I could eliminate them now, but since I have some things in mind, I'm going to take one monster back to the camping ground. First, I obliterate four monsters soundlessly and put them into the storage.

The remaining one monster is chasing my back without even realizing that its friends have all disappeared.

In accordance with crisis perception, I leap to the side.

Thus I evaded an attack from the spider bear's claw which had its body hanging upside down like a pendulum. Seems that the spider is hanging by using its thread on a big tree.
The spider which has reached the top of the pendulum separates from the thread and makes a landing ahead. The tree behind which has been used as the fulcrum is breaking apart.

The spider bear ahead lifts its forelegs making a threatening pose, I kick it while being careful as not to kill it.

I run past it to the highway.
The spider bear comes out of the forest a bit later. Since it'd be troubling if it loses sight of me, I throw a big lumber at it while purposely missing.

I dash to the camping ground and call Pochi and the girls who are on guard duty.
I'm planning to raise everyone's level while procuring food, killing two birds with one stone.

"Pochi, Tama, get ready for battle. Nana, after you hit the monster with Magic Arrow, wake Liza and Arisa up."
"Enemy~?"
"Fainanoresu." <TLN: Fail "hai nano desu." lol>
"Yes, master."

The spider bear lost a bit of its HP from the magic arrow unleashed by Nana. It could cause damage even with so much level difference huh, this

magic arrow is quite an excellent magic.

With a short cane to cast Shield, I stop the spider bear.
The spider bear tries to reach behind the shield with its long leg, but Tama prevents it with her stiletto.

"Thank you, Tama."
"Nou puroburemu～?"
<TLN: She tried to say this in English>

Pochi is going at the spider bear from its behind diagonally, she thrusts at the leg joint with her stiletto. Seems that she hits it, but the attack is unable to break the joint.

A red light pierce through the monster's body from the opposite side.
The spider bear loses 10% of its HP with that one blow from Liza. It seems she wakes up in hurry since she's only wearing something that looks like long t-shirt without armor.

The spider bear changes its target to Liza. I must attract the monster's attention.

"Over here, you spider thingy!"

I provoke the spider bear while hitting it with the shield. Is this what they call shield bash? Its HP decreases. Oh no, it'd die before Arisa and Mia come out.

>[Provocation Skill Acquired]

I immediately activate Provocation skill. After that the battle becomes a cinch. After all, the hardest attack of the enemy is only coming at me obstinately.

With this skill, it should be easy in the labyrinth.

After Arisa and Mia who come out late unleash their magic, it becomes a one-sided battle of the beastkin girls.
Since we're fighting near the camping ground, the old people and the

children who have woken up are watching from a distance. The children raise their voice whenever Mia use her magic or Liza's spear lit up.

At last, the spider bear lays down and stops moving after receiving Liza's attack, raising conspicuously loud cheers from the children and the old people.

6-14. People of Baron Muno Territory (5)

Satou's here. When I went to the countryside during my childhood, I played by the riverside a lot. I remember keeping beautiful stones like they were treasures. Right now, I wonder if they're still being kept in the closet of my parent's house along with my memories.

◇

"Liza, I'm counting on you for the recovery of the magic core. You can leave everything beside the magic core as it is."
"Yes, master."

First thing first, I hand a dagger to Liza who holds nothing but her spear and ask for the recovery.

"Wait a minute, you went alone to do some dangerous things weren't you."
"Since I wasn't able to sleep, I went to gather some herbs and got attacked."
"Didn't I tell you not to go alone? Even though you've got shield skill, you could still easily die if you're careless!"

After apologizing to Arisa who has teary eyes, I face toward the old people who are looking at us from afar.

"I'm sorry for the disturbance in the middle of the night."
"We don't mind it, but is that monster a spider bear?"
"Yes, it's a spider bear you've mentioned in the afternoon, it might be a stray who've lost its way."
"Your luck were bad huh, it usually only gets to human habitation once in every few decades. This is the first time, I've seen one in my life."
"Is that how it is, it could have been dangerous if our capable girls didn't do their best."

Maybe it came out because their prey were hunted to exhaustion by human?

I thought that they appeared this time because of the land reclamation, but they were originally monsters which didn't get close to human habitation huh. If I didn't reclaim the land, these people might became victims someday.

"Say, is the one with red light a magic weapon?"
"Those onee-chan were using magic~."
"What are you saying, that person's shield is made with magic!"
"It did block all the monster's attacks~."
"But, even that red spear was BOOM, like that."
"I'll become a spear when I grow up."
"It was amazing right, like VROOM."
<TLN: Satou used Shield magic, not shield equipment in ch. 6-13, sorry for the mistake, it's been amended now>

The attack from Liza's spear during midnight is really eye-catching. The children who notice Mia's and my magic are only a few. Still, little girl, what do you mean by becoming a spear.

"I thought you were a merchant, turned out you were a magician huh."
"I'm only a beginner on both, leaving that aside, about this spider bear, I don't need anything else besides the magic core, so everyone can get the meat or the fur."
"That's the best thing I could ask for, but is it fine? If you take it to the town, you could sell it for high price you know?"
"It's troublesome to carry something that big."

The elders who are hesitating decide on it after this words from Arisa.

"Old man, you don't need to hesitate. Rather than trying to keep some queer appearance, it's your top priority to ensure tomorrow's food!"
"You're right. Then, I'll accept it with gratitude."

We leave the spider bear body while the blood is draining out, it will be dismantled tomorrow.
Next, I'm praying that while they're surviving with this monster's meat, they would discover the farm land.

◇

"Onii-chan, this is, thank you."

A little girl who comes together with Totona gives me a small bag with a lot of pebbles inside. The pebbles are beautiful stones seemed to have been picked from the riverside. This must be this little girl's treasure. I'm okay with this kind of normal gratitude.
I pick one and return the rest to her.

"I'll only pick this one, you should treasure the rest."
"Un."

The little girl bashfully hides behind Totona.

Cheers are raised at the place where the spider bear body is hung. It seems Liza has started the dismantling.
Since Totona and the girl are fidgeting nervously, I urge them, "Go take a look at it."

The thing that I got is an opaque red pebble. I didn't pick the most beautiful pebble, but when I appraised it, [Snake Blood Stone] was shown. Where does the snake come from.
Since this stone is one of the ingredients for [Antidote: All-Purpose], this might be a lucky find. I check on the riverside at the reclaimed land, it turns out there are a lot of the same stones there.

There's still time before breakfast, I guess I'll go pick them. Today, the breakfast is being handled by Lulu, Nana and Arisa. Lulu strives to teach Arisa how to cook.

"Mia, I want to take a walk along the river, do you want to go together?"
"Nn."

I invite Mia who has just came back from washing her hair and body with hot water. I wonder if the scolding from Lulu works well, recently, she's not loitering around when she's nude.
Mia hands me a towel and makes me dry her hair. Arisa shouts, "You're too

sweet with Mia! Dry my hair too please~.", from afar, she's the same as always. Didn't I dry it just the other day?

I go toward the opposite of the river by jumping across stones that are scattered around on the shallow water.

"Satou, hand."

Since the gap is a bit wide among the scattered stones, Mia extends her hands and I catch them to pull her.
Maybe I used too much force, Mia fell on my chest. If Arisa sees this, she'd likely say something again.

While picking up the intended stones on the riverside, I gaze at the river. Taking a stroll while listening to Mia's leaf flute play, this is truly an extravagant time. Yup, really calming.

"There's no fish."

Mia who were looking at the river while playing the leaf flute, muttered so. There isn't even shadow of fish in this river. Not even other aquatic organisms like crabs in the riverside exist. They were probably caught by Totona and the other and the neighboring villagers.

"It seems there are some birds."

The smaller birds seem to have cleverly survive. I continue picking the stones while we take a break.
We're enjoying the quiet stroll until Pochi calls us.

It was a bit hard to stop Pochi who came and tried to jump in the river since she wasn't able to cross the stones. Thanks to that, the languid atmosphere completely disappears. As expected of Pochi.

◇

It has been two days since we left the old people and the children. We've

meet thieves three times already, but we only left them half-killed since they were just common ordinary thieves. It has just been thrice, but I feel that the thieves' equipments are too good here. Back then thieves were using things like bow and arrow, woodman's hatchet, and daggers which can be said to be tools for everyday life, yet in this three occasions, they were using equipments like straight sword made from properly casted bronze. Furthermore, the leader-looking man even had breastplate and shield made with metal.

Although, even if the thieves had better equipments, they're still nothing against the beastkin girls. They were easily defeated without the girls even breaking a sweat.

"Master, a carriage~."

Tama who sits on top of me driving the wagon points at a meadow with her left hand. I can't see it since Tama rests her feet on my shoulder. Since it can't be helped, I turn my whole body to look there. One part of the carriage is peeking through the meadow. There's no one around there according to the radar.
It's probably a victim of thieves. I should make them some graves, but since I don't want to see gruesome spot, I decide to ignore it.

"I wonder if it was attacked by thieves."
"It probably is."
"Thieves should be beaten back nano desu!"
"Beaten back~."

Arisa and Pochi who were piqued with Tama's voice appeared from the back. I'll overlook her for casually holding my arms, but since her hand is reaching to my thigh, I take a poking stance.

"Master, I'll return this book, so please lend me nature magic book next~."

Arisa who protect her forehead changes the subject while lightly glares at me, I receive the book.
I put the book into the bag, take out the nature magic book from there, and give it to Arisa. By the way, it's not from the storage. Since I got advanced magic books from Trazayuya, I put the introductory books I got from

Seryuu city that Arisa gave back into the bag and left it there. I usually use it as a substitute for pillow.

As for the literacy rate, everyone has became able to read the 100 pieces of learning cards. Only Arisa and Nana are at the level where they can read books. It seems Nana has been able to read characters since the day she was made. Lulu and Mia can read simple picture books. Everyone sure learns fast.
Pochi and Tama are stuck with the difference between written and spoken language, so they can't read well. Since they've became able to read numbers, I'll teach them arithmetic next time.

"Master, this schedule, what is it?"

She shows me a paper taken from the nature magic book. It's the paper I've bought from flea market that was worth 100 gold coins.
I took a look at it during a break before, but it was just a paper mostly composed of date and schedule. It's interesting that the schedule look like it's printed, but since sometimes there are scribbles with random line and numerics drawn like spiderweb, I can't see its worth. So I thought that it might have some secret, and tried doing various things like looking at sun through it, but then I neglected it.

"Biopsy?"

Arisa said so while looking at the paper.

"There's nothing like that written there right?"
"If you read it vertically, that's what it says you know?"

Vertical reading? There's something like bulletin board even in this another world huh.
When I look at the paper, it surely reads that.
I put the paper into the storage, sort it by date, and read it in turn. I see, it's certainly possible to be worth 100 gold coins.

"Arisa, you're great!"
"Fufun, if you want to praise me then I'd like you to show it in your attitude~."

I leave the reins to Tama, and hug Arisa. "Uwaah, so sudden, nnnoo~", she's letting out weird sounds, but well, it's fine.

I want to read the content of that paper in detail, but since we're going to encounter thieves in about two hours today, I leave it for later. The thieves this time is a group of 30 people.
Furthermore, there are four people from the knights of baron Muno territory heading here from that direction.

The thieves should be able to easily defeat those knights, but they don't look like they're going to attack the knights, I wonder if they don't want to fight knights even though they have advantage in number. The knights also seem like they don't notice the thieves, they're going straight here. Just in case, I arrange Liza to protect the wagon's rear, and Pochi and Tama to guard the front.

"The merchant over there, stop. The great me is a senior knight of baron Muno, Elal."
"Well well, knight-sama, nice to meet you, I am Satou, a merchant."

Since I don't know the exact etiquette, I go down the wagon and bow.

>[Etiquette Skill Acquired]

...was my etiquette until today not enough, or was it wrong--Let's not pursue the reason too much.

"Did you see any luxurious-looking noble-riding carriage? Or did you see a beautiful woman riding a white horse?"
"I came from earl Kuhanou territory, but I didn't see anything that look like that carriage or that person. I did see a carriage that looks like it had been used by merchants in a meadow just beyond this."
"You have no lie in that words right?"
"Yes, of course. Trust is the most important thing for merchants after all."

The knight is threatening me by gripping the handle of his sword, I calmly answer back. It's nothing compared to Liza's spear.

"Alright, sir Bezz, Sir Donoza, you check that carriage and then deliver the order to the guards at the border just in case. We will report back to baron."

The knights parted in two group and went away without even thanking for the information. It looks like the thieves are attacking the knights, maybe they find the decrease in number to be a good chance.

They're not people I'd want to save, but since the thieves are already lured out, let's accept this opportunity.

6-15. People of Baron Muno Territory (6)

Satou's here. When I tried western games for the first time, I was surprised how easily it was taking away other people's life. It's cute to call it culture gap, but it can't be taken lightly in parallel world.

◇

Seems that the thieves toppled the knights with ropes and casting net, and attacked them. When the knights come into our view, they're desperately struggling to fight back from inside the net. The net looks easy to cut with sword, are they amateurs?

The thieves are also frantically attacking them, but since the knights are wearing full body armor, the attacks aren't quite getting through.

Since there are only three archers of the thieves, Pochi and me split up to take them down from the trees. I wonder why they're always on the tree. It's a mystery.

The thieves who have noticed us are coming toward us, but they've already been reduced by half when they're around 200 meters before us. Mia attacked with Mustard Mist, and the thieves who were coughing in fit got quickly incapacitated by the beastkin girls. Nobody seems to have died for the time being.
I leave the wagon to Lulu, and ask Nana whom I've casted with Shield to protect her.

I also use Shield on myself and head toward the battlefield along with the beastkin girls.
I cut the net restraining the knights with a dagger while the beastkin girls are keeping the thieves company.

"You did well, merchant! You damnable thieves, became prey for the great senior knight Eral-sama's strong sword!"

After the other knight silently nods, he follows the knight Eral, and they raise bloodbath with the thieves. Even though the two are only level 9, their equipments and battle skills are far apart, so it becomes one-sided slaughter. They make sure to kill the thieves who are lying on the ground after they've been neutralized by Liza and the others . They're really merciless.

"Oops, sir knight, stop right there."

A bearded daruma who seemed to be the thieves' leader came out of the forest. The minion on his side is holding a woman in traveling clothes hostage. The woman is tied with a rope.
<TLN: Daruma is a traditional Japanese doll, I can't think of any English equivalent. Try to google it and you'd be able to instantly imagine how the thief leader looks like.>

"Hum, a hostage huh."

What's this, my crisis perception is terribly warning me. Is there an ambush somewhere? I keep my attention on the surrounding.

No.

It's coming from the knight Eral.

The knight Eral is going to stab the hostage woman together with the man behind her, I throw the dagger on my hand to repel his sword.

Fuh, I made it.

While confirming the safety of the woman, I avoid the blade of a thief who attacks from behind. It seems the knight Eral can't determine if he should attack me or the thieves.

Jeers are coming from the bearded daruma.

"Ceh, you don't care with hostages huh, are you really a knight?"

The bearded daruma, a thief, is more of a humanism than the knight...

The bearded daruma ward off the knight Eral's sword with his axe.

The other knight cuts the man who hold the hostage from behind. What's with the knight in this world?

"Toruma!"

That scream comes from the woman who was made hostage. What's this? Is the neutralized man not a thief. The knight who hears the man's name uttered seems to have judged that the woman is also a thief, the taciturn knight raises his sword toward her. I place myself between them, relying on Shield.

"Knight-sama, you're attacking the wrong opponent. This person is not a thief."

I don't know if the taciturn knight believes my word, but he leaves the woman alone.

The knight Eral's battle with the bearded Daruma ended in a flash after the taciturn knight went to help him. The other thieves are going to run when they see that the bearded daruma is going to lose, but Pochi and Tama throw stones at their feet, arresting them.

"You coward."
"Fuhn, fool. It's unthinkable for the honorable knight to fight mere thieves in equal footing. Good grief, they always spring up no matter how many of them we rid of."

After they're finished dealing with the thieves, the knights finish off the ones who are tied with ropes behind the wagon. I can only see this as excessive slaughter. I was going to protest at the knights, but I was stopped by Arisa who had came beside me before I knew it.

"Fuhn, it's a waste of food to let thieves alive. I thank you for your assistance. You can feel honored. I'll leave you with the thieves equipment, it'll be usable for your trade."

The knights went off after leaving words that didn't really feel like

gratitude.

By the way Toruma-shi is alive. Since he didn't die instantly, I made him drank a health potion, and his complexion returned in a blink. This immediate effect is unpleasant even after seeing it so many times. His breath is steady even though he's still unconscious.

Hayuna-san--the name of the woman hostage--tells us that the baby of her and him is being kept in the hiding place of the thieves inside the forest. They couldn't go against the thieves since their baby was made hostage.

I make Hayuna-san who wants to go together to the hideout sleep with Arisa's magic.

◇

Mia, Arisa and me are going to attack the thieves hideout.

I wanted to go to the hideout alone, but Arisa insisted on going together no matter what, and Mia who was feeling sick with the smell of blood took the opportunity, so it was decided that we're going together.

The hideout is only about 100 meters away from the highway. After we make the thieves sleep with Arisa's magic from the outside, we leisurely save Hayuna-san's baby.

"Al~right, baby rescue mission clear!"
"Nn."

I leave the baby to Mia since Arisa is calling me.

"That baby has a gift. It's quite rare."

The baby has an unusual skill, [Oracle].

"What kind of skill is it."
"The skill has the same effect as getting oracle from the gathering of a lot of

priests and miko from the temple praying for hours."
"That's convenient."
"However, since you could die if you thoughtlessly use it too much, looks like it can't be abused."

I guess it's like some kind of god's hot channel. I somehow imagine a working salesman holding a cellphone.

"Now then, putting aside the baby, what do we do to these thieves."
"It's probably alright just taking the weapon and armor, and leaving them alone. They probably can't continue thieving business after their friends have been eliminated right?."

There were 3 thieves inside the hideout. I had thought that they were prisoners at first since they all delicate looking men who seemed to have never been in a fight, but their affiliations are the same thieves gang as with the bearded daruma earlier, so it's probably not wrong.

"You're sweet as always eh. Well, it's fine. Still, there are only delicate men huh. I wonder if they're lovers of the bearded daruma earlier? Since it somehow feels like BL, I'll forgive them."

I don't care with the thieves' preferences or virtues, so I leave the gathering of their equipments to Arisa who's letting her delusion comes out of her mouth.

"Found treasures."

I thought that it was some kind of erotic item since it was coming from Arisa, but it was just a normal necklace.
It has a small jewel that looks like lapis lazuli attached.

"It's an amulet. It's probably a stolen good, but it's quite good of a magic item. I don't know the type though."

The search is over soon, and we've collected not only normal sword, but also armors, daggers, arrows and bows among various things. As for the food stuff, we only take luxurious food like sake.

When I check the map, there's a storehouse hidden within the wall in the boss room. When I check inside it, there are assorted jewelries and money totaling at 5 gold coins, a lot of high-grade liquor, and several ill-matched books.

"Heroes' tales isn't something that a thief should carry. And there's even a love story between a knight and a noble girl..."

Even though he was a bearded daruma, he could read words? If anything, these would probably sell well in shady pawn shop huh.

"Ja ja~n, look at these."
"Good job, Arisa."

Arisa shows me two scrolls wrapped in first-class looking cloth. They're Shelter and Remote Arrow, but unfortunately Shelter has already been used.
It's probably carried by a traveling merchant or a noble for self-protection.

"What, you're only seeing the scrolls? Notice this cloth too~."

I try to appraise it. Looks like it's a kind of magic tool. From what I understand, it's a material called Yuriha fiber which I haven't heard before, it has high defense against physical and magical attacks. If it doesn't have any strange effect, then I'd make something for Lulu from it, even though it was a man's.

"Looks like it has magical properties huh. Since I don't understand the explanation of the special effect, let's put a hold on making equipment from it."
"Uu~n, I wouldn't want if it's cursed and can't be taken off. Even though it's a waste, it can't be helped."

In addition, there are three horses tied in the back of the hideout. I look at the shed nearby, but I can only find one harness for the boss' share. I put the harness to one horse which has the only different breed.

"Ara, they were sure prosperous thieves."
"Looks like it, there's only one harness you know."

"I'll ride."

Mia rides on one of the horse without saddle. Seems that she's used with playing with wild horses in her birthplace.
Learning from Mia, I also mount the horse. Of course it's the horse with saddle. I put my foot on the stirrup and get on in one breath.

>[Horse-riding Skill Acquired]
>[Mount-riding Skill Acquired]

The latter seems to be skill for things besides horses. Since it's pitiful to let only Arisa walks, I put her in front of me. It's fine that you're leaning your head on my chest, but I want you to stop pressing your butt on me. Since Arisa is holding the baby, I'm only warning her, but it'll be punishment time when we get on the wagon. Of course, not in sexual way.

We get to the wagon while holding the baby in the arms, the thieves corpses are lined up on the roadside there. Looks like their equipments have been successfully retrieved.

"Master, I haven't cut the head of the corpses, what should I do?"
"It's fine to leave it alone, there's still two days before the next town, they'd smell bad if we take them."

I definitely do not want to journey with 30 severed heads.

6-16. People of Baron Muno Territory (7)

Satou's here. In my childhood, I couldn't help but found magnet which floated because it's meeting another magnet with the same polarity to be mysterious. Magic show was popular back then, so I thought for a while that the floating magnet was magic.
In a parallel world, magnet might be considered to be a magic stone.

◇

The inside of the wagon which usually has a lot of space is now full of luggage.

I make this camouflage in order to prevent Hayuna and the man become suspicious. I lay around cookwares, boxes and barrels containing two days worth of food inside the wagon. Keeping them from collapsing was hard. During this time, I feel thankful for having Item Box.

Of course I've made sure to leave space just enough for people. Mia complains, "Cramped.", but this is probably still pretty spacious compared to a normal carriage.

As expected, even the indifferent Mia asked, "Where did you take those from?", after this, but I showed her magic bag <<Holding Bag>>.
Putting aside Mia who will part way with us in Bornean forest, I don't mind telling other members about Item Box, but I want to avoid situation where our girls get kidnapped because the rumor floats around, I'd rather the harm comes my way. Of course, I don't think that these girls would spread the rumor, but there's no denying the possibility of someone overhearing them when they're talking between themselves.
It'd be safer to keep this a secret until everyone becomes strong enough to fend themselves even if they get into trouble.

In that respect, if it's magic bag <<Holding Bag>>, then the aim would be the item, so even if it got stolen, it wouldn't be particularly troubling.

◇

"Should we wake them soon?"
"Right, let's leave them alone until the next camp. If they're weird people, let's leave them before we get to Muno city."
"Okay."

For the time being, we're not going to encounter thieves or beasts, so I leave the driving to Lulu. Liza is training horse riding. Mia is on her side, she teaches Liza how to handle a horse. Of course, Liza is riding the horse with saddle.

"Master, I want to touch the cheeks of this young organism. I request permission."
"Don't touch the baby."
"I appeal for reconsideration, master."

Nana fixes her eyes on the baby while asking, but it's NG to touch the baby without the guardian's permission.
When I prohibit it, she strongly turns her face toward me in protest.
Her impact is reminiscent of horror, so let's postpone the problem.

"Let's ask for permission when the mother wakes up."
"Master, I request permission to stimulate the wakening of the mother."
"No, don't wake her until she naturally does."
"...Yes, master."

Nana consents while looking a bit sorrowful, but when she looks at the baby, she sits on the floor, hugging her knees, and she puts her chin on her kneecap while looking ecstatically at the baby.
Arisa is not here, she's with Lulu on the driver's stand. It seems she doesn't want to be near Toruma with his sweaty smell.
Pochi and Tama look quite interested with the baby, but they don't get close to her. The two seem to be a bit gloomy somehow, I wonder if they're not good with babies?
When I asked what's wrong, they only answered back with, "It's nothing

nodesu."
It doesn't look like nothing at all, so I'll got talk to them after the meal later.
When you're full, you'd feel better, and your worries would become lighter.

◇

Pochi and Tama who have been looking down earlier rush off in high spirit after we get to the camping ground while saying, "We will hunt big prey today nodesu." Do they want to show off to the baby?

Arisa and Mia are going to gather firewoods.

"Arisa, the long cane would be a hindrance when you're gathering firewoods."
"I want to test some new magic, it's hard to use new magic for the first time with a short cane you know."
"Finally huh, what kind of magic have you decided to learn?"
"I'm still undecided. I've narrowed my pick to three magic, so I thought of picking one after trying them. Since it's a wasteland beyond that cliff, I won't set the forest in fire even if I fail at it right?"
"It's alright." <Mia>
"Even if it burns, Mia will extinguish it she said."
"Leave it to me."
"Be careful not to get Pochi and Tama caught on it."
"Okay."
"Nn."

I give the permission while feeling exhausted toward Mia who's giving V-sign with her expressionless face. Nah, I guess she's not expressionless, her cheeks look a bit red, she might feels a bit embarrassed.
It seems that she's still minding the failure of magic testing yesterday which had gotten the camp flooded.

Today's meal are being prepared by Lulu and Nana, I'm going to teach Liza how to take care of the horses. From what I've read in some manga or magazine, you would bond with your horse if you brush it after riding on it.
I'm also thinking that Liza should learn horseback for the sake of warding

the thieves.

"Liza, are you doing well with the horse riding?"
"Yes, I've done something similar to a mount beast called Lineback back in my hometown."

I could somehow can and cannot imagine the creature from the subtle name. Let's not pursue it.
I tie the horses on the tree nearby and give them some grains and straws. The three of them eat quite heartily. I don't think it's because of hunger since they're not that thin. It might unexpectedly be because of the fodder.

◇

Since we've gotten more horses, I'm thinking of putting them in practical use.

I've thought of putting more pulling horses for the wagon, but I'm worried with the suspension system of this second-hand wagon if it becomes faster. I'm afraid that the axle would break since the road is rough. I've also thought of making suspension, but I don't have the equipment for making large-scale spring, so I give up.

If I could make a magic tool that could replicate the floating magic that the magic shop girl have demonstrated, our transportation capability would go up. It'd be like a linear motor somehow.
There is a method to make magic tools that could reproduce similar magic inside the books from Trazayuya, but since it needs large-scale facility and nature magic user, it's unreachable. It looks like the blocks at the maze were moving by using the same principle.

In the end, all the three horses are to become mounts. If the beastkin girls ride on it while armed, it likely would ward off thieves.

First, I decide to try making harnesses for horseback riding. Fortunately I have a lot of leather, so I make them while checking the sewing and cutting method from textbook. I shave woods for the stirrups since it's can't be

made with just leather. I have samples, so it's easy.
I've completed it in 30 minutes, and I immediately try putting it on the horse to check the fit. Yup, there doesn't seem to have any problem.
I should make small harnesses for Pochi and Tama.

When I'm taking off the harness, Nana calls for me. Seems Hayuna-san has woken up.

"Thank you very much. You even used magic potion for the sake of Toruma."
"I don't mind it, there's no substitute for human life after all."

Although it was a magic potion, the one I used was the cheapest to make, but that doesn't need to be said.

Hayuna-san takes of her hood while saying thank you. She's a woman with reddish blond hair. She's relatively beautiful, but she doesn't look like a 25 years old with her childish eyes. Even so, she looks like a proper mother as she cuddle the baby. Her breast are larger than most, but she couldn't be called "Kyonyuu", though her waist lines are nice. Her level is 3, she has [Cleaning] skill.

The man who's sleeping beside her, Toruma-shi, is a 30 year man with unreliable looking impression due to his tall and thin figure. His hair is light brown, no beard. His level is 4, he has [Social] skill.

When I'm having a quiet friendly chat with Hayuna-san, Arisa sits beside and asks me in whisper with anxious-looking face. She's wearing her hood, probably because Hayuna-san and the man are here today. Her hair which could be peeked from the hood looks to be golden-colored. Since she isn't going through some kind of awakening, it's probably a wig or magic.

"You don't have interest with married women right?"
"I don't, adultery is fruitless."
"T, that's right huh! You understand don't you."

I face toward Hayuna-san since it's rude to talk in private.

"It looks like you're going on a journey, where are you heading?"

"Yes, we were eloping, but we had been forgiven by the parent's house, so we were going back to the capital city of the dukedom."

Isn't eloping a word you'd want to hide?
Oh yes, this Toruma-shi, is a nephew of the duke. Arisa shouted, "Template, kita", when she looked at this person. I was glad that it happened when they were sleeping.

"Ufufu, you guys are really intimate."
"Today, they're strangely attached."

Hayuna-san is smiling while looking at us. Arisa and Mia are sitting on my sides since some times ago for some reason. At first, it was only Arisa, but midway, Mia imitated Arisa and also joined. What are you girls plotting.

The chat with Hayuna-san moves to when she was caught by the thieves. Apparently, they were captured three days ago.

"Yes, I didn't think that we would be alive. The merchant who was driving was killed and the five mercenaries we hired as escort escaped as soon as they saw the thieves."
"That was harsh. Even though the thieves number was a lot, the ones in this area aren't that strong."
"We disparaged the mercenaries, 'Betrayers', many times at that time, but it was too reckless to challenge dozens of opponents... "

Normally you wouldn't know how strong your opponent is until you fight, so I guess it can't be helped. It would look like you'd lose against armed people double your number.

"Even so, it's good that you come out safe."
"Yes, Toruma used a self-protection scroll to cast magic."
"Hoo, that's amazing. What kind of magic was it?"
"It was really amazing, after the magic was used, wall of light appeared covering the carriage, the thieves weren't able to get close."

So the one that Toruma-shi had used huh was the Shelter scroll from the thieves' hideout. That means, the Remote Arrow scroll that came together with it might also be Toruma-shi's belonging. Although I don't intend to

give it back in the first place. According to Arisa and Liza, the things taken from thieves elimination are to be divided to the people who participate on the elimination. In this case, it's fine officially too since the knights have given the permission.

"Did you not escape after you put up the wall of light?"
"The magic didn't allow us to escape from that place, so it became a staring contest with the thieves for two hours."

Naturally, that would make you feel more dead than alive. During that time, they survived after they frantically persuade the thieves, "You can get ransom money." They were forced to became hostages since the opponents were knights at that time.

"Ransom money is it?"
"Yes, Toruma's parents are noble, so Toruma wrote letter asking for ransom and gave it to the thieves along with his ID."

I see, so the luggage only contains Hayuna-san ID.

"That reminds me, when you were held hostage, you didn't call for help to the knights?"
"The thieves threatened to kill our daughter if we uttered even a word."

However, I don't understand why they brought Toruma-shi along. They should made the delicate men in the hideout to do it. Well, whatever.
When we're having that talk, Toruma-shi wakes up.

"Ha, Hayuna!"
"Toruma, you've woken up. It's alright now. Look, Mayuna is also safe."
"I'm so glad, I'm so glad, Hayuna, Mayuna."

I have to say, please give more thought for your child's name.
Their reunion scene continues until Hayuna-san's baby bursts out crying.

6-17. People of Baron Muno Territory (8)

Satou's here. During the time when I was working, I've won intense arguments when we had difference for the requested source, but now that I'm living a calm life in this world, I've grown a bit dull.
However, I wonder if living humanly is nothing but illusion for the people who lives in this brutal world.

◇

"Here's the luggage we have recovered from the thieves."
"Oh dear, you even got our luggage on top of helping us."

Hayuna-san says thank you while receiving the luggage. Toruma-shi peeks into the luggage, and asks after hesitating.

"Have you seen a dagger inside the luggage?"
"Those were the only things in the hideout. But there should be many of that from the thieves' belongings."
"It's a dagger with white leather sheath..."
"If it's that one, it was held by the leader-like bearded daruma. Wait a minute."

While saying so, I take out a dagger from the toolbox on the edge of the wagon. Of course, I took it out from the storage. The dagger's shear is relatively simple, but there's a beautiful family crest design placed at one point, it's quite fashionable. The blade is not a magic tool, but it's made from mithril forged by dwarves.

"Is this it?"
"Yes, that's it!"

Toruma-shi who's going to receive the dagger from me is stopped by Arisa's words.

"Wait, that's our appropriate reward for exterminating the thieves. We've even acquired permission from the knights. If you want it, you have to present something with equal value."

"This has a crest of my family engraved. I can't hand it to others."
"So what? You, I know that you're emotional from the reunion, but you haven't even said thank you for the saving right? Moreover, you even have the gall to claim other people's possession?"
"You need to be more polite toward adults."
"Sorry, but that's for when the negotiation is over. During a negotiation, I'll talk in equal term even if the opponent is a king, that's my style."

It really does look like she'd talk in that tone even to a king.

Toruma-shi cannot retort to Arisa's harsh words.
Hayuna-san who's unable to watch this is putting a good word for Toruma-shi.

"Dear, first, please say thank you to them. This person had used expensive magic potion to save the dying you. Furthermore, he protected me from knights and thieves' sword saving my life. On top of that, they sneaked into the dangerous thieves' hideout, and even saved Mayuna. Now, let's tell them words of gratitude."
"You're right Hayuna. I was wrong. Merchant-dono, this Toruma am truly grateful for your kindness."

Toruma couple bow together.

"However, I'd like you to return this dagger no matter what. Of course, I'll give anything I'm able to."

It seems he has recognized that the property right belongs to me, but it's still, "Return it to me.", rather than, "Please give it to me."

"Is anything alright?"
"M, my daughter and wife are off limit."

Toruma-shi frantically covers his wife and daughter. I think it's rude that he covers even my line of sight. Perhaps, he's thinking that I'm a man without

honor.
Though I guess it can't be helped if he thinks like that to a person who's journeying together with seven girls of different types.

"Right then, you don't have money or jewelries right?"
"Umu, everything was taken away by the thieves."
"What about magic tools?"
"Those were also taken away by the thieves."

Arisa shrugs exaggeratedly.
She's probably aware of that from the start, but she knows about his connection to the duke--in other words, a nephew of big noble, so she's probably attempting to weasel rewards from his parent's house.

"It's impossible right now, but if we get to the dukedom... no, I'll pay if you let us go with you until the castle of baron Muno."
"What? Are you acquainted with the baron?"
"Yeah, he's my second cousin from my father's side. You, I can't commend your calling, add the 'sama' suffix."

Arisa plainly ignores Toruma-shi's words.

"Then, how much is this dagger worth?"
"It's an important heirloom, so it has never been valued. As a gratitude, I'll give you 5 gold coins."

Arisa glances to me, exchanging looks for a second.
By the way, the dagger's market price is 30 gold coins. The price is extraordinary among non-magic tools. For now let's exaggerate the information I've got from the AR.

"Toruma-san, I've evaluated this dagger just before, with the nicely designed sheath along with the beautiful mithril-made blade forged by the famous dwarven artisan, Dohar-shi, it would not worth less than 30 gold coins."
"If we get it to a connoisseur duke, or other nobles who like to compete for their interest, it could be more expensive right."

Arisa is speaking quite a vicious thing.

"T, that would be troubling. However, even nobles would have hard time raising such large amount of gold coins.
"Right~, since our master doesn't have money problem, you could pay it with non-cash."
"We ran away from house, so even if I go back to my parent's house, I have no great item to give you."
"Oh right, I've heard from your wife that you were using scroll to defend yourself from the thieves right?"
"Yeah, my parent is managing a scroll workshop. When I was leaving my house, I was given many scrolls to protect ourselves."
"Hoo, scroll workshop huh, I'd like to observe it by all mean."
"Yes, If you pay a visit to the capital of the dukedom--Oyugock city, please visit us."

I unintentionally cut myself between the talk, Arisa is glancing at me as if saying, "Don't disturb the negotiation."
Still, scroll workshop huh, if I learn how to make them, I could mass produce them myself. It's probably full of secret, so normally they would refuse a visit, I'm lucky for this.
When Arisa asks the price of scroll, '3-5 silver coins' comes back as the answer.

"Our master is a collector of scrolls. He could chant spell for magic himself, so when we get back to our mansion, he would explain about scrolls like from what age or from which workshop this and that scrolls are to the servants."

Arisa is quite a good talker huh. If I'm a magician then I have no need for scrolls to cast magic, and if I'm a collector then I probably wouldn't resell it. Moreover, he wouldn't give me only the same kind of scrolls.

"Oh, I thought that you were a merchant, turned out you're a magician are you."
"I'm still an amateur who could only use a few magic arts. Rather, I'm more active as a merchant."
"Scrolls distribution is regulated by law, so I can't sell you one if you're going to resell them, but if you're a magician then there's no problem. I'm saying this just to be clear, but it's impossible to sell intermediate magic

scrolls as decreed by the army."
"Yes, it's enough with beginner class. However, since I'm a collector, I wouldn't be pleased if you only give me the same type of scrolls, so I prefer that you give various type."
"It might be difficult to find as much as 30 gold coins worth of scrolls with no duplicate, since we usually only make the well-selling ones of around 20 types, I might have look in the warehouse."
"Ara, we could just ask the people from scroll workshop to make one with the requested spell right."
"Ah, that's right. Of course, it would take several days. Satou-dono, are you fine with that?"
"Yes, the contract is established then."

I nod to Toruma-shi, and is going to give him the dagger, but Arisa stops us again.

"Verbal promise is no good. I'll make a written contract, please put your signature and make an inscription wax from the seal on that dagger's pommel."

Arisa holds out the written contract to Toruma-shi. Written there are, [As compensation for the dagger, Toruma-shi is to pay Satou with scrolls worth 30 gold coins],[The price of the scrolls shall follow its retail price], [The scrolls cannot be duplicate], [If there is not enough variant, Satou will choose beginner spell to be made into scroll], [In case the scroll need to be made, Toruma-shi will be bear the cost for the order], and lastly, [In case of contract breach, Toruma-shi and his family will serve Satou as slaves for 30 years].

"Would you erase this last entry?"

Toruma-shi puts a bitter expression, but Arisa persists.

"No, but, okay then. Is the present head of your parent's house a viscount? Or a baron?
"It's viscount. Viscount Shimen."
"Then how about, 『In case of contract breach, in the name of viscount Shimen, Toruma-shi will pay 90 gold coins』, that?"
"90 gold coins?! That's too much."

"Ara, it's just a what if scenario. When you fulfill the contract by giving 30-40 scrolls, that'd be the end of story. Or are you going to give up the dagger?"

Arisa is smiling very badly. She's really enjoying it. Arisa is surely an S. No doubt.

"It can't be helped, the latter is fine."

In the end, after groaning for a while, Toruma-shi signs the contract that Arisa has written. She even prepared a marked copy. In her previous life, I wonder if she worked in the law firm?

◇

"Birds~"
"Prey are few nodesu."

Pochi and Tama brought back two birds about the size of pigeons, and five small eggs. They also brought beech fruits, wild grasses, and edible wild plants inside the bag. I wonder if they were taught by the old people and the children, they brought back more variety of wild grasses. I give appreciation for the two who are dropping their shoulders since they cannot find many prey. I'm going to boil the eggs and give half for each members.

"All of your slaves look strong."
"Yes, according to the soldier of Seryuu city, they're comparable to senior knights."
"That's amazing. But, if that so, then I could understand how you could exterminate that many thieves."
"That's because there were two real knights with us today."
"Those knights! Are their your acquaintances?"

As expected, even a mild, or rather a weak-willed person would lose their cool when it's about the people who've almost killed him.

"No, it was our first meeting. Seems that they were knights of baron Muno."
"What, they were knights of cousin-dono huh, I can't believe that a knight would go after person from behind even in my wildest dream."
"Yes, they also almost killed the madam."
"Is that true?"
"Yes, it was good that I made it in time."

While we are having that chat, the meal's preparation has finished. We arrange the seating for the meal like usual. Without the large platter, the menu today are fried bird meat with vegetables on individual tureens, potato soup inside the mugs, and two boiled potatoes for each.

"Hoo, these are quite grand."

Toruma-shi licks his lips dropping his cheeks, but it seems he's not pleased with the plates' number.

"Huh? Are you going to let the slaves and servants eat together with the master?"
"Yes, they're my journey companions. We'd deepen our solidarity by eating together. Isn't it also like that in the army?"
"However, what if we catch illness by eating together with slaves."
"Dear, these children are quite clean. We ourselves smell of sweats."

I've never been in an army though.
Toruma-shi looks dissatisfied, but he's convinced by Hayuna-san. I didn't think of it because Zena-san acted like normal, but a noble-related person would not want to eat together with slaves after all huh.

Still, saying things like catching illness if we eat together is rude.

I divide the seating during meal into two. Rather than for Toruma, I did it because it seemed that our girls wouldn't be able to enjoy their meal. Since it'd be rude for me as a host to isolate Toruma couple, together with Nana, I sit with the couple.

6-18. People of Baron Muno Territory (9)

Satou's here. It's said that ability to read atmosphere is indispensable, but it's different in parallel world, there are unexpectedly a lot of people who behave as they wish here.
If I forget about the difference in social standing, it seems that I would make various mistakes.

◇

When Nana takes off her hood, her blond hair unfolds. Toruma-shi is dazzled by her, Hayuna-san elbows him. So he's really being kept on a short leash by Hayuna-san.

Nana is holding the baby on her arms after receiving permission from Hayuna-san. She looks completely content. Looking as if she's a holy mother--if she doesn't talk.

"She's so fluffy, and soft nano desu. Master, I want to have a young organism too."
"Let's talk about that after this journey is over."
"Masuta?"
"It's my nickname."
<TLN: Nana says "Master" in English (Masuta), not "Goshujin-sama" like the other girls.>

Afterwards, the Toruma couple were interested with Nana's eccentric way of speaking, but when I told them that she lived a sheltered life in a distant land which made her poor at Shiga language, they assented. I told them that her meal was only water because her body was weak. Toruma couple seem to be thinking that Nana and I are a married couple. I leave that misunderstand alone since there's no particular harm anyway.

"This is delicious. It's full of rural taste, but the abundant meat is nice, and it even has peppers on top of salt!"

"Thanks to the chopped peppers put in the fried food, my body is warming up."

These two, even though they're saying things as if they're reporters from gourmet program, they're eating intensely. I guess it can't be helped that they're greedy since they probably haven't had good food at the thieves' hideout.
Pochi and Tama are quiet today. They would usually go, "Another please nano desu~". I peek at them, they eat slowly while chewing thoroughly today. They've only eat about half their portions.

Huh? They stand up after finishing half their meal and go toward here. Was it not tasty?

"Meal sharing~?"
"I'm giving half nodesu."

The two offer their plates to Hayuna-san. I wonder why they're presenting it while having very earnest, if not painful, faces.

"Oi oi, no matter how delicious, we won't eat scrapes from demi-human slaves you know?"

Toruma-shi's jeer aren't exactly loud, but the timing is quite bad making it permeate through them.

Hearing that, Pochi's and Tama's ears fall down.

Toruma-shi's remark might not be as harsh if it didn't contain discrimination against demi-human.

However, I cannot let his jeer toward the two who had good-will pass.
Let's ignore this KY Ossan who can't read the atmosphere around him. I won't call him Toruma-shi anymore, from now on he's Ossan.
<TLN: KY=Kuuki Yomenai=can't read the atmosphere. A Japanese slang, it's written in alphabet. Ossan means middle-aged man.>

Oops, rather than talking about Ossan, it's Pochi and Tama.

"What's wrong?"
"It's for the sake of the breast milk for the baby nodesu."
"If she doesn't eat a lot~ the baby will die~?"

I don't quite understand what they're saying, but the reason why they look gloomy since some times ago is this huh.

"Master, there was a baby of a leopard-head woman at the previous owner's place back then. The mother's milk didn't come out because we rarely got food, so the baby died of starvation. During that time, the demi-human slaves were cooperating together to share half of their food, these two remember it."
"I see, Pochi and Tama are kind. There's no need to worry, we have enough food, so you two go ahead and eat. You can ask for another serving like always too."

I understand after listening to Liza's explanation. Considering how the people from that brown rat guild were, I wouldn't be surprised with that treatment.
After hearing my words, Pochi and Tama look at each other and say, "Yatta", happily, while holding their plates with both of their hands on top of their heads. As expected of them for not dropping the vegetable pieces.

Hayuna-san says, "Thank you for worrying.", to Pochi and Tama, but the KY guy is saying, "Then, I will help myself with another serving too." Of course, not only Liza, Lulu also splendidly ignores him. Ossan is wandering around unsteadily with his plate, but since no one responses, he dejectedly get out of the stage. It's pitiful that even Hayuna-san didn't back him up.

It doesn't seem like he's reflecting on it though, when Hayuna-san asks for another serving, he also puts his plate together, asking for another. I give it to him, not out of sympathy but because it's annoying hearing him grumbling on the sideline.

◇

After the meal I go inside the wagon with Nana since Hayuna-san is going to

breastfeed the baby. Nana had wanted to go see the breastfeeding, but since it's embarrassing for me, I take her along.
I'm going to replenish Nana with magic power now.

"Master."
"What is it?"
"I also want to give breast milk to the young organism."
"It won't come out right?"

I could see Nana touching her own breasts since I'm currently supplying her with magic power from behind. Yu~p, they're big.
The milk should comes out when she has a child, but I don't know if a homonculus like Nana could give birth.

"What should I do?"

After we're finished with the replenishment, Nana turns around while asking that question.

Ooh.

This is, good things.

I inadvertently extend my hand, but I suddenly get swatted from behind and fail to do so.

"W, what are you doing, you two!"
"Dirty."

It's Arisa and Mia. Still, when did Arisa make a paper fan anyway.

"'What' you say, I'm just supplying her with magic power."
"Back."
"That's right, didn't we decide that you'd be doing magic replenishment on her back."
"Of course, I did it on her back. Nana had suddenly turned around."
"Is that so?"
"Is it true?"
"Yes, affirmative. I was requesting master to make me produces breast

milk."

W, wait Nana-san?　If you said such turbulent words...

"Seiza."
"Nn."

I obediently sit in seiza while objecting, but they don't let it pass. It might be because they noticed my gaze to one part of Nana's body midway.
I was almost made to rub Mia and Arisa breasts in order to make them grow big, but I evaded it somehow. That was dangerous. I prefer fighting wagahai-kun to this.

NSFW

◇

After I've finally been released from Arisa and the girls, I go back to where the couple are. It seems the feeding is over.
Looks like the baby was locked in the cellar since her crying was noisy back in the thieves hideout.

When were chatting, Lulu brought tea for the three of us. It's not the blue tea like usual, but herb tea. Lulu says that the blue tea is not good for the mother, or rather, the mother's milk given to the baby.

Hayuna-san and me say thanks to Lulu while receiving the tea, but Ossan asks "What's this, it's not a sake?　Is there no wine? Ale is fine too", instead of thanking her. He looks like a drunken old man who harasses a cabin attendant. When he's told that there's no one who drink here, he looks disappointed.

"Still, there sure are a lot of thieves in this territory."
"You're right, we've met many even before we got caught by those guys. At that time, they were outnumbered so they ran away before they fought."

So it's true that thieves would avoid you if they can see mercenaries' presence.

"Furthermore, I was surprised at how many villagers were trying to sell themselves."
"If the harvest is bad, isn't it normal?"
"They said that they didn't have bad harvest."

I tell him that the cause is the wedding of the baron's daughter, but Ossan says something unexpected.

"Hee~, that day dreaming Soruna is getting married huh. Which noble is her partner? He must be quite manly to take a bride from cousin-dono."
"Her partner is the hero-sama it seems."

Hearing that Ossan bursts into laughter while rolling on the sheet like there's something funny.
Even so, I think there would be many noble who would want to marry a lord's daughter, even if he's just a baron. I want to ask what he means by manly, but it'll be going off topic, so let's ignore it.

Hayuna-san who can read the atmosphere reminds Ossan. I wonder how did she marry this person.

"Dear, what are you finding interesting? We don't understand if you just laugh."
"Ha, ha, no well, cousin-dono is famous for liking hero, but I never expect that he would have his daughter marrying hero. This will be a good tie with Saga empire."
"Is Baron-sama fond hero?"
"Yeah, his hobby is collecting books about heroes' tales. There was even a rumor among merchants that he specially built theater in Muno city just to have theatricals about hero."

I see, so that fondness for hero is used.

"Actually I have a merchant acquaintance close to royalty who has meet the hero directly, and the face, figure and features of the hero that he has told me don't match with the hero who's currently staying with baron-sama."
"Hoo? Then Satou-dono, are you saying that cousin-dono has been deceived by a fraud?"

"I'm not saying that much. I cannot think why would a hero be away from Saga empire beside for subjugating the demon lord in this time nearing the demon lord season. Furthermore, there was even a public disturbance in Seryuu city involving sir silver mask who resembled the hero. I'm worried that baron-sama might receive damage too."

I don't actually have a shred of concern, but it's fine like this.
Next, I should naturally mix the thing about the demon in our talk.

"I've also heard rumors about a demon with bat wings appearing near Muno city. Back when I stayed in Seryuu city, a senior demon attacked there, so the rumor 『Isn't Muno city also being targeted by demon』 is floating around among the merchants."

Mix lies in the truth, even a Russian novelist said so.

"So there was such rumor huh. That explains why we never pass by merchants' carriage as soon as we entered this territory."

Ossan looks convinced while saying so, but I say that's because of the bad public order. On top of that, if you hire people like those at the border, people will avoid this territory which has nothing but bad things. People who don't have urgent business in the dukedom are probably going to avoid passing here right?

I wonder if this talk would reach some influential person, even though it's in the form of rumors. I can't expect anything from this unreliable Ossan, but since Hayuna-san has also heard it, I'm anticipating that it'd flows well through the wifes network.

6-19. Golden Holy Sword and Magic Tools

Satou's here. I don't have memories of taking a bath in my own house at midnight after I've become a working adult, probably because of working late. I mostly found myself taking hot shower after waking up early in the morning.
I've only been able to leisurely take my time soaking my body at the grand public bath when I'm staying over.

◇

The night has been cold for the past few days, so the couple are sleeping inside the wagon. Leaving aside Ossan, it'd be troubling if Hayuna-san catches cold and infects the baby.

The combination for the night watch duty today is different than usual.

Usually, Mia, Lulu and me are the first, then Pochi, Tama, Nana for the second, and then Liza and Arisa for the last, but today, Mia is replaced with Arisa.

"What are you making?"
"It's Circuit Liquid."

In most textbooks they're only called magic liquid or Liquid.
The one I'm making now is different from normal Liquid. I'm making the recipe hidden in that bundle of papers.
Yup, even though the raw materials are different, the way of making it is the same as normal Liquid.

"Fuh～n, huh?　Isn't it usually shining red?"

Arisa is quite observant eh. I don't answer Arisa since I'm concentrating right now. I continue putting magic while watching the Liquid shines blue.

I pour the finished Liquid into the Circuit carved on one half of the wooden sword.
Since I've let the Liquid temperature to be cooled down, it's not burning like with the wooden pedestal before.

"It's black, is it really a wooden sword?"

I affirm it by lightly nodding since it's pitiful if I ignore her too much. Even though Lulu is watching quietly, this girl is noisy.

I spread thin glue on the remaining half of the wooden sword, and then wrap it with strings. Then I put the sword on the magic bestowing stand, and slowly manipulate the Liquid on the wooden sword using the stand, drawing small intricate pattern.

It seems that Arisa is tired from looking, she lies down sideway hugging her knee while biting a jerky. She's looking here while remaining in that posture.
Lulu who's beside me gently wipes the sweat on my forehead with a handkerchief. Lulu's girl's power is surely around 530.000.

I try putting magic into the finished wooden sword. The magic flow is worse than Liza's spear, but it's quite good in itself.

The wooden sword's whole body is shining blue.

The light remains even after I stop putting magic power, although it's a bit dimmer.

"Hey, hey, isn't magic sword that shines blue... Th, that can't be it right. There's no way that could be made so easily."

Unrest appears in Arisa's words. It seems that she has noticed the true nature of this sword.

I put magic into the wooden sword once again.
The blue light is pretty.

"Hey, is that really it?"

I wait until the afterimage melts into the darkness, and answer Arisa.

"Yes, it's a holy sword."

◇

"W, wait, holy sword you said?"
"To be exact, it's a pseudo holy sword."

The thing that Arisa had discovered with vertical reading on the paper back in the afternoon was a record of a man's study about the making of holy sword.

The main subject is how you need special Circuit Liquid to make holy swords. You need raw materials like Dragon Powder, powdered jewels, gold nugget etc. I blew 15 gold coins to make the prototype earlier. If this was an MMORPG, a lot of people would give up on raising this skill.

The original part is just that, the rest is just like how you make a magic sword. That particular part is explained inside the books from Trazayuya, so I refer to there.

There's a reason why I called it pseudo.

The wooden sword made earlier is a success, but I'm not able to make holy sword from forged swords. I can't carve precise circuit on a forged sword since it's made by striking hot metal. It's a success this time since wood is a comparatively soft material.
The casting process during the making of magic swords requires someone with high level magic arts skill like Trazayuya, so for something like holy swords, it probably needs even more complicated ritual.

"Pseudo? But it's glowing the same color as the holy sword that the hero (Masaki) has."
"It could exert the same power as the original if the opponent is weak and without substance, but it's still a wooden sword after all. I don't know the

Circuit to increase sharpness attack power, so for now, it's nothing but a wooden sword with holy attribute."

Contrary to what one may imagine, the man who left this recipe is not from Saga empire, but Shiga kingdom.
It seems that he was a former researcher of the royal institution who lost in dispute and was driven away to the border. This was also hidden with vertical writing in other papers. Most of the papers contain grudges, but one of them details about the success of the creation of a holy sword with the help of a person called Elf Sage. The sword's name is also written, but since it's quite extravagant, let's not talk about it.

As for this wooden holy sword, it'll break in one hit if it clashes against even the weakest holy sword in my storage, Gjallarhorn. It's probably not even as strong as Liza's spear and only about equal with Pochi's and Tama's short swords.

This blue Circuit Liquid--the research papers refer
it as Blue--does not only possess holy attribute on its blue light, but also draws magic power from nature even if the user isn't putting magic power into it. When I tell Arisa about that function, she shouts out, "Perpetual motion Kita!". Rather than perpetual motion, it's more like a wind or solar generated power, I think it's quite convenient. Making it in large-scale is probably NG since it could cause destruction of nature like it has done to the mountain where that Dryad is.

"Let me borrow it～"

Arisa hold out her hands while saying so, I give it to her. Let's make her a matching wooden magic sword later. I could imagine the figure of Arisa holding the sword with both hands while saying some chuunibyou lines.

Arisa is enjoying the blue light while putting magic power into it.
Halfway through, she begins to rapidly pour magic power into it, I don't know what she's thinking. What'd you do if it explodes. I take it from her before the crisis perception kicks in.

"That's dangerous, what would you do if it explodes."
"I'm sorry, I was curious how much it could absorb, and I couldn't stop. I

didn't reach the limit even after putting 100 points."

I'd like to find out that limit, but it looks like Arisa wouldn't let me go walk in the dark now. I decide to wait for the opportunity since I don't want to hurt anyone in the camping ground.

Might as well play along with this.

I paint the wooden holy sword's surface with golden paint. I carve rose pattern on the hilt and apply powder from crushed sapphire to it. In addition, I put a sapphire that looks like a flower petal on it. I thinly paint the blue liquid (Blue) below the sapphire and when I put magic power into it, it shines blue.

Since the blade part looks desolate, I draw arabesque pattern on top of the golden paint with the blue liquid.

When put with magic power, the golden blade glows blue light, it's glittering and pretty. The rose part on the hilt looks especially good.

"Master, it's lovely desu."
"Uwaah~ what's that, looks like ornament that would make an upstart cries with joy."

Certainly, it's too gaudy huh. Let's make the wooden magic sword silver.

◇

Now then, since the verification is complete, let's begin the trial to make a magic tool for the future. I've already finished the design during the leisure time when we were moving. There are already several samples, so I'm just going to easily join together the parts among them.

First, I draw pattern with the type of Liquid that generates heat on the overly thin copper plate that I've made by pressing copper coin and stretching it during the afternoon today.

Next, I make a propeller the size of a fist by shaving a block of wood.
I put a hole on the center of the propeller and compose circuit that would make it rotate when poured with magic.

The sample for rotating Circuit is easier than I've thought, I just disassemble the spinning top that I have bought before and examine the circuit. The circuit is as simple as expected since it only consumes little magic power. The total cost is roughly one silver coin.

I've easily made this, but looking at the rate of spread, people who are able to create magic tools are probably quite few.

I insert the completed part to the cylinder, and attach the handle as the last touch.

"It can't be!"
"Yes, it's the thing you'd want after you wash your hair."

I leave the trial run to Arisa. The propeller begins to move as she put magic power, and the heat is generated, flowing together with the air.

"I didn't think that the day I could use drier here would happen."

By 'here' she probably means parallel world, you'd want convenient things yeah.
It's going to get cold soon, I should make heating system next. It might be good to make water boiler before Lulu's hands hurt from washing laundry in cold water.

The dream is expanding.

6-20. People of Baron Muno Territory (10)

Satou's here. I've heard that you can see fragments of your memories inside your dream.
Although, ever since I led a life of brief sleeps after I became a working adult, I never dream anymore.

◇

Pochi and the girls come to change place with us since the time is up. Arisa says, "I'll be watching you so you don't go out in the night." and takes up the position beside me to sleep together. Usually I would toss her, but since she's done well during the negotiation with ossan today, I'll let her off for once, though this is not a reward.

Of course I warn her that if she tries to sexually harass me, I'll tie and hang her on a tree.

Since even Lulu is taking the position on the opposite side while saying, "M, me too, I'll watch too.", requesting while fumbling her words, we end up looking like character for river.
<TLN: River=川>

I hope 5 years passes fast.

Contrary to my expectation, Arisa went asleep without trying to do anything funny.
If she's always like this, I'll let her sleep together anytime.

I check on the demon's movement before I go to sleep.

It's loitering around at the castle and the thieves in the forest like usual, but sometimes, it produces a level 1 split body (Splitter) and lets it wandering around in the city. I tried monitoring it for the whole night before, but since

it didn't seem that it killed anyone, it was probably a split body used for gathering information.

There is also another suspicious movement from elsewhere.

The thieves around Muno city are merging with the large thief group in the forest near the city. There are also quite a lot of serfs who have escaped from nearby villages mixed in, they've became a group of around 500 people. If the smaller groups who're moving join with them, it would become 700 people. A revolution could probably takes place.

Furthermore, from northwest--about on the right from where we are now, a bit away from Muno city--armies of demi-goblin are entering the territory. There were only 50 of them in the evening yesterday, but they're nearing 1000 now and are still increasing coming from outside the territory.

Still, I wonder if they have 'demi' because they're subspecies of goblin. Surprisingly, they're not demi-humans but more or less monsters. I'd like to look at them since I've never seen one in person yet.
I've also never seen orcs, but since they're written on this world's tales, they surely exist somewhere.

The one that knight Eral was looking for during the noon was probably the second daughter of the baron. Why I would think so is because she's currently at the base of the large thief group. She might have been kidnapped and became a hostage. I wonder if it's because of her parents.

Looks like tomorrow, our journey is going to be peaceful, thanks to the movement of the thieves. Since the unnecessary troubles would be decreased, let's strive to reach Muno city at the morning of the day after tomorrow.

I went asleep after I've finished the general investigation.

◇

I had an unusual dream.

I'm dreaming of me playing with the girl who's my first love from the countryside on the grounds of a shrine during my childhood.

If it's just that then it would just be a nostalgic dream, but the scene is different and her personality is also different even though I'm sure that she's the same girl.

I cannot remember the girl's name, but I wonder why do I have this dream during the time when I'm embraced by Lulu and Arisa.

◇

"Like I said, I can't accept with only river."

Arisa gets up while shouting some strange words. She's been grinding her teeth which let out a loud sound since a while ago. In addition, her fingernails on her hands which are grabbing my arms are painful. It's recovered even before I take damage, and it only redden my skin so I leave it alone, but painful thing is painful.

"Good morning, Arisa."
"Good morning? I'm Arisa, your darling."
"Almost there, the last one was wrong."

She only answers by repeatedly pretend-hit me, but there are traces of tears on the area around her eyes. What kind of dream did she have.

Lulu is still sleeping, but she also has traces of tears on her face. When I lower my line of sight, Pochi and Tama are sleeping while curling up like balls on my stomach, saying, "I hate cold~", "I hate hunger nano desu.". It looks like they're having nightmares.

Since everyone seems to be having nightmares, I wake them up by pinching their noses in turns.

"Master? Thank goodness!"

"Morning~? Nyau, it's warm nodesu."
"Good morning nano desu. It's time to prepare for breakfast nano desu."

The three seem to be still half-asleep, they're rubbing their faces on my chest and shoulders with sleepy eyes. It's rare to see such state of Lulu. Usually Arisa would have took this chance to jump in, but she's gone to wash her face.

I'm thinking that an incubus might have came but there's nothing when I search for it. If it was really incubus, my crisis perception would have kicked in earlier.

Mia and Liza were also dreaming about their hometown. It seems that Nana didn't have any particular dream. So she did not see something like electric sheep or magic sheep.

There is nothing attacking us that day as expected, it's a truly a peaceful day.

It just that, Pochi and Tama become excessively clingy to me while rubbing their face on me today, I couldn't make anything during the travel. Since they look really uneasy, I play card and shiritoriwith Pochi and Tama for the whole day today.

I invite Hayuna couple since they look bored, but it seems Ossan gets addicted to the games, he becomes really frolic. I wish Hayuna-san infuses him with her elegance.

◇

That night I have the continuation of the dream from yesterday. And sure enough, everyone also had strange dream when I asked them the next morning.

I thought that it was the work of the demon, but after seeing the demon's skill and its tribe's innate skill, it doesn't seem so.

The demon is from a tribe called Short Horn, it seems they have short horn with bat wings, and look like gargoyles. Its skill are, [Ghost Magic], [Mind Magic], [Transform], [Bewitching], only those fours.

This demon has been staying in the neighboring forest since the noon yesterday.

The gathered thieves were peaking at more than 700, but the number is only in one digit now. I don't understand how it could decrease so sharply during the time I wasn't looking, but after seeing zombies which keep appearing with the demon at the center, I understand the situation.

The demi-goblin lot are also coming near the zombies. They've stopped increasing, but they've became 3000 strong in the end.

Sometimes the zombies' number decrease, in exchange skeletons appear, I don't want to know what happen.

The baron's daughter who seemingly was kidnapped by the thieves seemed to have successfully escaped. She's running into the forest depth together with a man with conspicuously high level among the thieves, I don't know if he's charmed or if they're acquaintance from the beginning.

Inside the baron's area, the territorial army has gone toward the thieves' forest early in the morning, it looks like the rescue operation for the daughter has begun. They're numbering in over 1000. Apparently, they've also employed local mercenaries and slaves.

The hero isn't among those in the army. Looks like he's inside the baron's castle.

With these many flags standing, even without crisis perception skill, I get premonition for great tumult happening.
I must evacuate everyone to the safe place as soon as possible.

◇

We've finally arrived at Muno city, but the gate is sealed shut, we can't get in.
Right now, we negotiate by showing Ossan's dagger, but since none of the guards are familiar with the seal on the dagger, we've been invited to the castle.

"I will go with Toruma couple to meet the baron. I'd like everyone to go to the village up ahead with the wagon to do something."

Ossan invited us all, but if I'm careless here, the couple could die and I wouldn't be able to visit the workshop.

Even though I'm going to meet face to face with the baron, I don't really have the intention to tell him to do something to his territory. I feel sorry for the people like the children and the elders I've meet back then, but it's not at the degree where I want to save them no matter what. Even regarding the fake hero, I only feel that I should help in some way or other.

Therefore, I want to ensure the safety of Liza and the girls.

"Master, what should we do?"
"Un, there's a village up ahead. I want you to gather pebbles that look like this at the river beside the village. I want you to ask the village's chief to request everyone to collect those pebbles."
"Tama will gather~"
"Pochi will work hard too nodesu."

I continue the talk while putting my hands on Pochi's and Tama's head who take firm poses with "Swoosh."

"Un, I'm happy for your eagerness, but we should give the works to the villagers."

I explain it to everyone in detail.

They have to gather 100 pebbles. I'll buy the pebbles for 1 copper coin each. I leave the judging of the gathered pebbles to Tama who has gathering skill. I'm entrusting Arisa with calculating the money and negotiating with the village's chief.

Liza will be beside the wagon so that the villagers won't underestimate them.
Nana will be the master, while Lulu and Mia will be the servants.

"What should Pochi do nodesu?"
"Pochi will act as bodyguard for Arisa when the pebbles are exchanged for money."
"Roger~ nano desu."

Now then, the explanation is OK with this. I should join with Hayuna-san and Ossan.
Arisa catches my clothes before I can get off the wagon.

"No, absolutely no."

Tears accumulate on Arisa's eyes, and she refuses wholeheartedly.
Huh, does she really not want to be the negotiator? I think she's more suited for that than anyone else here.

"Then, would you swap with Lulu?"
"No, I don't want to let y, master go alone."
<TLN: She was going to say Anta>

It's fine of her to call with anta, but she used the stiff goshujin-sama huh.

"It's not like I'm going to a battlefield. I'm only accompanying Toruma couple to the baron's castle, I'm only thinking of seizing the chance to meet with the baron face-to-face you know?"

I try to sound as carefree as possible with some jokes.

"I've thought of appealing to him about the people if he's a person who's easy to talk into, but I will prioritize my safety first, so it's going to be alright."

However, sensitive Arisa doesn't seem let this pass. She presses on me while raising her shoulders.

"That's a lie, the fact that you don't take us into the city is the proof."

You're spot on.

Now then, what to do.

6-21. People of Baron Muno Territory (11)

Satou's here. Split body (Bunshin) is a staple of Ninja, but when I was a child my juvenile mind thought, "If you could move that fast to make bunshin, you should've attack like that instead."
It might be the right choice when you fight against firearms.

◇

"I promise, it won't be dangerous."

If it's just me alone then it'd alright. The opponent is just a level 30. Moreover, I have magic attack and magic shield, not only physical now.

"No, I'll go with you."

That's bad. The demon is in the forest right now, but I don't know when it's going to be back. I want to leave Arisa in safe zone.

"If you say further than that, I'll use 『Order』."
"Try it, my maiden's heart won't lose to such thing like 『Order』."

It can't be helped.
I didn't want to use 『Order』 as much as possible.

"Arisa, this is an order. Go to the village I've said earlier and ask the mayor about the work. Wait in the village until I get there."

After telling so, I go down the wagon.
I hear something falling on the ground behind me along with Lulu's short scream.

When I turn around, I see Arisa crawling here while her face becoming blue.

"I w,will absolutely go with you. This time... I wont... Let you go alone... Ha."

By disobeying my order, she's not only tormented by the magic from the contract, but it seems that the slavery collar on her neck also harms her physically. The collars on the beastkin girls are just decoration, but the ones on Lulu and Arisa are real magic tools. They were attached from Kubooku kingdom.
No, this isn't the time to think that. Arisa would die if I leave her alone.

"Arisa, I cancel the order earlier."

Arisa is gasping painfully. What a rash girl. I wonder what makes her go that far. The collar has left red mark on Arisa's neck.

"Good grief, you're really a rash girl."
"Who's the rash one here. You jumped into the shadow to save Mia, and even just the other day, you lured out a monster almost twice your level to secure food for the children... I'm worried about you, stop doing unreasonable things alone."

Arisa says so while shedding tears.

I've noticed something from those tears and "Almost twice your level."

Dang.

I didn't expect this at all.

I thought that Arisa who had shrewdly noticed that I hid my skill would had also realized that I falsified my level, I thought that she was playing dumb about it due to my misunderstanding.

I can understand Arisa's unnatural state up until now when I consider so.

She would certainly be worried if a level 10 guy picked a fight with a level 40 undead boss which had unknown unique skills.

I'm sorry that I think you're like an overprotective mother.

However, this is troubling, if I tell her that I'm hiding my level right here and now, Arisa's pride would collapse.
I can't exactly clown around Arisa who's genuinely worried too, I guess I have no choice but to take her along.

It's my penalty for pointlessly worrying Arisa. It'd be hard to protect her, but if it's just Arisa alone, I would protect her no matter what.

"I understand Arisa, let's go together."
"R, right, you should've said so from the start. You'd have the strength of hundred me with me around!"

Even while wiping her tears with her sleeves, Arisa boasts, she's back to her usual self. Still, her vocabulary is old like usual.
Arisa gets back to the wagon to change her clothes that has been covered in mud.

Now then, I wonder who should I choose to replace Arisa. Among them, Liza is the best choice, but considering her tribe, it would be difficult to negotiate with insular villagers.

Which means, the next candidates are Lulu or Nana. I can't imagine the whimsical Tama to negotiate, and the silent Mia negotiating would be as probable as the sky falling.

I want Lulu to do the negotiation if possible, would have loved if she acquires interpersonal skills, but since she's shy around people, it might be impossible.

Then, Nana is the only one remaining huh.

She normally has eccentric behavior and her way of speaking is flat, but she'd be in "my pace"-mode whoever her opponent is and her appearance is a beautiful woman.
I guess I'll ask Nana to bear the brunt, and Liza to follow-up her.

"Nana."
"Yes, master."
"Have you ever done negotiation before?"

"No, I am a virgin. I have no experience."

...who ask you about sexual experience.
<TLN: Japanese joke, negotiation:交渉, intercourse:性交渉.>

When I see her expression and atmosphere, I've thought that she's just naive, but I have some doubt, "Weren't you being wrong on purpose?"

Let's tell her more in detail.

"I want to ask you to negotiate for employing the villagers, do you have any knowledge about doing something like that?"
"I have not."
"Okay, then I want you to cooperate with Liza to deal with it. Nana, you become the front during the negotiation while Liza is the one who's actually doing it from the back."
"Yes, master."
"I will exert the fullest of my ability."

Liza's reply is stiff. Is she nervous?

"Liza, you don't need to get so worked up. I don't mind even if the negotiation fails. If that happen, I want you girls to stand by on the river near the village."
"I understand, master."

It seems that strength leave her shoulders. I'm worried that she might have interpreted it as, "I don't expect anything from you.", but it seems that I'm just imagining things.

◇

Arisa who has came back is wearing clothes that she's made after the fashion show back then. The skirt is equipped with frame made from wire inside, making it expands in three dimensions. She's wearing blond wig.

That's good and all, but who's the little girl with brown braided hair behind?

...No, I can see Pochi's appearance as a double.

"Is that Pochi?"
"Ara, you did well to know. Arisa-chan version 2, Pochi human form."

The two are taking pose energetically.
Even though they've dressed in cute clothes, taking power ranger pose ruins it.

"Version 2 whatever, how did you do that to Pochi?"
"Don't whatever it! I can't forgive that nonexistent reaction toward blond twin-tail, even though it's not drills."

Twin-tail look good with figurine or 2 dimensions, but in real life, I think having twin-tail only makes you look more like children though?

"I've received Arisa's magic nodesu."
"A~ah, didn't I say to keep it a secret. I create illusion using light magic. It's originally a magic to create split body, but I've arranged it for a bit."

I see, so it was light magic. However, to arrange magic in such short term like this, this girl is like some kind of protagonist from light novel.

Pochi human form looks exactly like Arisa if we exclude her hair style and color.

"Although if an illusion magic with bigger scale touch Pochi, it'd get exposed, and if I'm not near her, the spell would be broken. She might not be allowed to enter the castle if they know that she's a dogkin tribe."
"Would it get past something like magic detection?"
"Even if she gets exposed, I'll make Toruma cover her. I'm sure we'd only be scolded. Moreover, I want Pochi who has high offensive and enemy search skill to be around."

It feels like Arisa is optimistic that Pochi's cover will be blown. Also, I think Tama has higher enemy search skill. Although, Pochi was probably chosen because Tama would not be suitable for infiltrating.

"You know, during the dream yesterday, I saw that demon is disguising as the baron. Master was able to very narrowly avoid the demon's attacks, but you were finally cornered... Of course, I know that it's just a dream. However, if it was a prophetic dream..."

No, rather than optimistic, she wants Pochi to go even while taking that risk huh. Putting aside what I see myself, it seems that the members are excessively worried because they were having bad dreams.

Arisa is about to say something before stammering and stopping, then she's shaking her head as if she shakes off some kind of anxiety. Her swaying hair is hitting Pochi's face, Pochi holds her own face.

"It's okay! Even if it was a propethic dream, we'll get through it since you're with Pochi and me."
"Yes nano desu. If master is with Pochi, we're invicible nano desu!"

It's incomprehensible since the expression of the illusion isn't changing, but I can picture Pochi full of motivation in my mind.

◇

The dream that Arisa has seen is probably just a mere dream.

However, Arisa's worry is genuine. Her excessive worry is like some kind of loyal retainer like samurai, it's a bit scary.
When I find the opportunity after it becomes safe, I should do some actions that would blow away her worry, while making sure it would get seen through by Arisa.

Even though it can't be helped in Arisa's case, I actually want Pochi to be with Liza's team, but I can't think of any excuse in this situation.
I think I'm becoming unable to think for myself thanks to Arisa.

It can't be helped, I don't want to expose Arisa and Pochi to danger, but if an accident happen, I'll carry both of them and do something about it.

There's no one with appraisal skill that could see other's people stat in the city. Also, there aren't anyone who has magic skills from detection branch. It's convenient for us, but those people might have been eliminated by the demon to protect its secret.

I'm worried that the combat force is reduced for Liza and the girls, but it should be okay since we're not the target this time. Even if anything happen, the village is only 10 kilometers away. I can rush to get there in 90 seconds.

6-22. Battle of Muno City (1)

Satou's here. They've said that the punishment for traffic law breaker is light, yet here, the situation seems to be slanted toward the opposite of expectation.
I'm keeping safety in mind when I'm driving a wagon.

◇

Two horse-drawn carriages have come from the baron to pick us up. Either of them is a two-seater carriage. The doors are carved with relief that looks like it'd make stylish nobles happy, and also adorned with golden stones that seem like jewels.

Hayuna couple get on separate ride from us.

I've known it from preliminary check already, but this city is too deserted. Even though it's almost twice the size of Seryuu city, the population is only around 1/6 of it. Houses are standing in row as we leave the gate, but in the middle of the way, series of vacant lots covered with weeds unfold.

"There are many vacant lots huh."
"Sir, are you familiar with the incident 20 years ago."
"Yeah, although I don't know how much of it is true, I've heard the general rumor."
"Most of it is probably the truth. The vacant lots were the result of the king's armies setting fire in the city to destroy the many undeads who were attacking."

The coachman answered my question while facing the road. His voice is loud, not losing to the carriage's noise.

"King's armies?"
"Yes, after the undead had extracted their revenge by killing the entire lineage of the old noble, they remained inside the city without moving. So

the king had wanted to do something before they would move. The commoners who died from the fire set by the armies are several times more than from the undead since they wouldn't get attacked by the undead if they stayed inside the house."

At least, "Set the fire after you evacuate the commoners.", or maybe they didn't know about the actual site?

"Because of that, there were a lot of people who left this territory. Now, there aren't even 20% left of the people from 20 years ago."
"It's good that the city doesn't disappear even after that."
"That's because this city has a wall protecting it. The wall was made in the time of ancestor king and was enhanced with fixation magic, even if monsters attack, it wouldn't move an inch. A city simply cannot be made in another location if it's not by a high-ranking noble."

I see, no wonder the wall looks splendid in spite of the poor territory.

◇

I hear crashing sound and people's scream ahead the carriage. After a bit of pause, our carriage shooks a bit as it gets across something.

"Sir, and madam, I'm sorry for the shaking. Some poor people were jumping "Stop at once" in."

Arisa orders so as she interrupts the coachman's excuse. As expected of a princess, she's used with commanding words. The coachman reflectively stopped from Arisa's order.
The horse-drawn carriage had ran over a little girl.

I jump out of the carriage and run to the girl. The girl's HP is decreasing rapidly.

"Make ways!"

It's irritating to get through the people who swarm the girls with my

footworks. However, I made it barely in time.

I take out a magic medicine (potion) from my pocket while sitting beside the girl and make her drink it. It seems she has fainted, her breathing has stopped. The medicine spills out from her mouth because of that. Her HP has stopped decreasing for a moment, maybe because she's drunk a bit of it.

I've wanted to press her chest to do artificial respiration, but it probably has been hit by the carriage, her chest is depressed. It's impossible like this.

I take another potion from my pocket, and drink it to her mouth-to-mouth. Maybe because the effect is weak, the girl's HP bar fluctuates for a bit, then it begins decreasing little by little.
Even though Ossan who was fatally stabbed by a sword was saved, is it no good for this girl. Or maybe the damage continues on because the broken rib is piercing her.

Should I use the medicine with unknown effect in the storage even while knowing the risk?

Arisa who has finally caught up grabs a short cane from my waist.

"Let me borrow the short cane, ■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■■ ■■■ Light Healing"

It's a healing magic from light huh. Arisa is doing good.
However, it's just a temporary relief.

"It's no good, it's not enough with just light healing magic."
"We should take her to the temple priest."

The people around us deny those words.

"There's no priest who can use holy magic in this city. Everyone was caught after they were accused of made-up crime like corruption and thrown into the prison."
"Either way, she can't be saved with those wounds. Let her go without suffering more."

Not only her chest is depressed, her arm is bent unnaturally too. Her physical strength that has been fluctuating also begins dropping slowly. Her HP is already less than 10%.

When I've decided that giving her medicine with unknown effect is better than letting her die, the scene of me making the magic medicine (potion) flashes in my mind.

The differences between normal and magic medicines are in the reagent and the presence of magic power.

The reagent is just a thing to fuse the magic power with the drug.

Then, the immediate effect of the medicine is due to the existence of magic power.

I put the magic potion in my mouth once again. And before I drink it to the girl, I pour magic power into the potion. I have skill for bestowing magic, I should be able to do it.

I pour it three times the amount of magic power usually used to make normal magic potion.

"Wa... wait, is that some kind of skill, you're glowing you know."

I'm bothered with what Arisa is saying but let's think about that later. I make the girl drink the magic strengthened potion mouth-to-mouth.

Immediately after she's drunk it, her body becomes wrapped in red aura, but it soon disappears as if sucked in.

She hasn't completely recovered, but it's working. Her depressed chest and broken arm have been restored too. Her HP is stopped at around 40%, but it's not decreasing when I watch it for a while.

>[Magic Healing Skill Acquired]

>Title [Doctor] Acquired
>Title [Healing Specialist] Acquired

>Title [Saint] Acquired

◇

"Did you save onee-chan?"
"Yeah, she's alright now."
"Oh my, magician-sama is really great. I can't believe that kind of grave injury could be healed."

I give another potion to a little girl who looks to be the injured girl's little sister, she's clinging to her.

"If she doesn't wake up after 1-2 hours, give her this medicine."
"Un, I understand."

An old lady who seems to be an acquaintance with the little girl talks to me while looking hesitant.

"Magician-sama, thank you very much. However, lowly citizens like us cannot pay you back."
"It was my carriage that ran over the girl. I'm not expecting compensations at all. Rather, it should be the girl who should seek reparations."

I change the subject since it looks like it would have steered toward selling themselves again.
However, the expressions of the old ladies are poor.

"We can't possibly ask reparations. It's a crime to obstruct the path of noble's carriage like this girl has done after all."
"That's right sir, even if you save her now, she'll be caught by the soldier to become a slave or get hanged."

The coachman adds on the words of the old lady.

Oi oi fantasy, isn't that too severe.

I've saved her after much effort. I'll save her with any cost even if it's just

for my own self-satisfaction.
If by being saved means she'd become slave or executed, let's make it so that she's not saved.

The surrounding people seem to be allies of the girl anyway, the only real witness is the coachman.
Let's coax him somehow.

He might betray me later by telling what happen here to the baron, but rather than being suspicious of everything, let's use whatever method available.

"Now then, I've finished taking care of the poor girl who had been ran over by the carriage. Let's not make baron-sama wait any longer and go."

I make the coachman grips a silver coin.
The girl died despite the treatment. The girl's name remains unknown.

"Righto, sir. The girl who was ran over is pitiful, but it can't be helped eh."

This man can read atmosphere quite well. I'd like Toruma ossan to learn some things from him.
Looks like the coachman rides on the farce with the bribe. Even so, is his underling-like way of talking instead of the polite way from just before also a part of the farce?

The adults around also participate in the farce by pretending to cry. What sociable people they are. The little sister who can't follow the story has became flustered, but after the old lady whispers something to her, she immediately understands.

We get back on the carriage, and advance to the baron's castle located at the elevated ground.

At that time, the battle between the 1000 baron army and 3000 demi-goblins begins. At the moment, it seems that the baron army is advantageous.

>[Acting Skill Acquired]

>[Tact Skill Acquired]

>Title [Poor Actor] Acquired
>Title [Clown] Acquired

6-23. Young Lady and Knight Thief

"Father and sister are being tricked desuwa."

How many times have I told this to them. Yet, my words didn't reach anyone. And now, those vulgar ruffians are strutting this castle like it's their own.
<TLN: As you may have inferred, this chapter is told not in Satou's POV because there's no 'Satou's here'. She uses "Watakushi" to refers herself, by the way.>

Maybe that's why. I feel like something is calling me, and I've strayed to the old, old collapsed building inside the castle.
It's an old building that has been around in this marquis Muno castle since 20 years ago.

It has already been 15 years since my father received this territory. My mother, sister and me arrived in this castle 16 years ago, we've never left even once since then. The time when uncle Toruma came to play during my childhood was the most fun time.
Even though it's called castle, there are small forest and pond inside its ground, maybe it's to show the power as a marquis, so I don't really feel locked up.

I've searched through the inside of the castle, but this is the first time I'm here. Usually the maid will not let me inside saying, "It's dangerous."

I wonder if this is because I've entered an unfamiliar place. I think that the floating dust lit by the sunlight is beautiful, I feel pleasant. It seems that I would cough violently if I don't enter while covering my mouth with a handkerchief.

There's a throne in this room, I wonder if it was an audience hall of the marquis. The light spilling from the crumbled roof creates illusion that makes this room looks like a sacred place.

And then, I meet my destiny here.

◇

"O girl, do you desire power."
"Yes."

I answered the words that suddenly came out from the direction of the throne.
Even though I'm reflecting on it, I assert that I don't have any regret on the rash decision that I've made this time.

"Very well! Then, I will give you!"

Silver light that appears from the throne wraps me. It feels like it coils around my hair and body. When I'm assailed with anxiety, elegant bracelets appear knitted with silver thread on both my wrists. I feel something odds on my ankles, and anklets with the same design as the bracelet are there when I look.

"O girl, the contract has been established. Wisdom and bravery are yours to take."
"Where in the world are you? In addition, won't you kindly tell me what these accessories are?"

Even though I could hear him closely, I can't see his figure. I desperately try to keep myself calm and talk to the invisible gentleman.

"There is a large mirror behind that curtain. You should see there."

I go to the mirror guided by that voice. A tiara has appeared on my head before I was aware of it.

"The accessories on your head, hands and feet are my forms. I had ran alongside my master to the battleground, and finally accomplished my long-cherished wish. My master had left me here and said, "Help a person who wish to crush unreasonable power."
"Oh my, how wonderful. What a noble-minded person."

I wonder who is this the master of this tiara. I have never seen a talking magic tool beside in the fairy tales.

"Tiara-san, is it fine to call you that?"
"My previous master called me Raka. It was a name associated with the most famous knowledgeable magic tool <<Intelegent Item>> that came out in tales of his hometown. If you don't have any name you want to particularly use, I'd like you to call me Raka."
"I understand Raka-sama. As for myself, please call me Karina."
"This is pleasant. Karina-dono, you don't need to politely use "Sama" for magic tools. It is fine to just call me by the name."
"Then Raka. I want to borrow your power."
"It is inevitable. I will assist you whether the opponent is a hero or a demon lord."
"Oh my, how reliable desuwa, the opponent is a hero."

When Raka-san talk, the tiara is glowing blue, but is he at loss of words? The blue glow has stopped.

"Is there anything wrong?"
"No, it's just that, I'm just thinking that the master this time is firm, it's excellent. Particularly, master "It's Karina desuwa" Umu, Karina-dono."
"Yes."
"Since the opponent is a hero, does Karina-sama have any experience in magic and swordsmanship?"
"No, I'm good at embroidery and poem, but I leave the fighting to the knights."
"Fumu, is that how it is. My previous master was a hero."
"What is his name!"

I've done a shameful thing. I involuntary bumped against the mirror. This is also something I got from father. He's been talking about heroes since I was small, so I've also gained interest on heroes desuwa.

"I'm sorry, I cannot remember trivial things like name or appearance. Wielding a holy sword, he cut down thousands of demons, he was the owner of tremendous swordsmanship. Even though he couldn't use magic, he could cut the demon lord's magic and subjugated the demon lord. He was

an absurd existence."
"That's right, hero-sama has to be like that!"

I involuntarily put power in my fists. A hero has to be strong beyond common sense above all, If not, he's not a hero.

That self-proclaimed hero who has gained favor of father-sama and onee-sama could only narrowly win against a weak knight, he's just a small fry desuwa.
As the proof, he was always eluding the fight against the strongest knight in the castle, sir Zotor.

"Karina-dono, it's painful to say, but I can only reinforce the power that my master has. I, myself, have power to read mind and use simple magic arts, but I need to use my master's magic power to do so."
"Then, am I to remain unable to do anything?"
"Right, you'd be able to win against average knights, and I can give you physical ability enough to jump across roofs. If the opponents are the like of thieves, then you could obliterate them as long as you have magic power."
"Oh my, that's wonderful."

How wonderful it is. It's like the chivalrous phantom thief, Sharururuun.

"However, that is if the opponent is normal."

Hearing Raka-san's words, my fluttering heart hardened as if wedged.

"Is it no good?"
"Even if I could increase my master's power by one hundredfold, if my master's power is 1, it could only become 100. It's appropriate to call an existence called hero as unreasonable."
"Didn't your past master fight against that unreasonable power?"

The blue light is flickering, and Raka-san says something as if he's found a breakthrough.

"It is so. To be admonished by a baby, this is a good day."
"My, I'm an adult even like this."

I feel a bit shocked at my own words. Before I knew it, I'm at the age where I can participate in society. Onee-sama might have unexpectedly knew about the fact that the hero is an impostor. That man only looks like hero on the outside.

◇

"That man is hero desuno."
"Fumu, are you sure?"
"Yes."

I somehow feel the blue light from Raka-san flashing.
His next words are shocking.

"That is an impostor."

Even though, I was insisting about it, I might have believed it (that he was a hero) somewhere in my heart. Then, just what is the sword that he has which lets out blue light like a holy sword.
I went out of the hiding to convict him, but Raka-san's word stopped me.

"Wait, Karina-dono, who is the man beside that fake hero."
"Are you talking about the consul?"
"That man is a demon. He's most likely many times stronger than the fake hero. We cannot win."

N, no way! I was shocked to learn that the self-proclaimed hero is an impostor, but it was even more terrible to hear that a demon had been acting as the consul.
Demons are existences that have to be attacked with army. The only exception where an individual could win against the demon is only a handful of existences like the real hero.

"Ra, Raka. W, what should we do."
"Please calm down, Karina-dono. If my last memory is correct, this is the territory of marquis Muno right."
"Today it's baron, but yes, you're right."

"Then, there should be a community of wood giants in the depth of the nearby forest. If you're with me, we could get their assistance. However, I can't approve of a woman going deep into the forest alone."

I hate to dirty my dress, but a real hero wouldn't hesitate.

"Could the giants win against the demon?"
"Umu, they're not as strong as the hero, but they shouldn't lag behind a common demon."
"Then, let us go."
"It's reassuring seeing your prompt decision. Karina-dono could very well be a great supporter for the hero."

I try to remain calm as much as possible even though my heart is in festive from Raka-san's words, I head toward the forest.

◇

Guided by Raka-san, I leap over the caste's center and borrow a horse from the stable in front of it to go toward the forest.

When I tried to save a Unicorn who was caught by the thieves, I got caught instead, but I reunited with someone unexpected there.

"Milady, what are you doing in this kind of place."
"Sir Zotor, you too."

I didn't think that the strongest knight in this territory who had ran away several years ago would became a thief. Moreover, according to his story, the thieves are going to rebel against father.
With encouragement from Raka, I confide him about the fake hero and the demon consul.

"That, I've thought that he was suspicious, but to think that he's a demon."
"It is the truth. I swear on the honor of my previous master before Karina-dono, I do not tell lies."

I had thought that he probably got a lot of question while listening to my words. But he anticlimactically accepted the talk just like that.

"I feel bad for the chief of the wanderer that had accepted me, but I will leave here. Karina-sama, please allow me to accompany you to the giants."
"I allow it, knight Zotor."

This is wonderful desuwa. It's like in the tale.
I ride on the unicorn's back and go together with knight Zotor to the wood giants' village deep in the forest.

I do not know if I could obtain their cooperation.

No, that's not it.

I will obtain their cooperation no matter what.
By threatening, or defiling this body, I will accomplish my purpose. That is noblesse oblige.

I have the sword of sir Zotor, and also the wisdom of Raka-san who has spent long years.
Yes, right now, I have companions.

"Now, I am not afraid of anything."

I cheer myself so, and, toward the gate of the village of wood giants in front of me, I take a step forward.

6-24. Battle of Muno City (2)

Satou's here. Back then, a friend of mine has said that moe will save the world. Admiring cute things would heal you, that's no different no matter the world.
Moe might would unexpectedly save the world.

◇

I knew that the baron's castle is wide from the map, but after I actually went inside it, it's more vast than I've imagined. There are a forest and a big pond that occupy about three times more area than the castle.
People only occupy a few percents of the whole area, won't the maintenance be hard I wonder?

Hayuna-san and co. had been separated with us since they didn't get involved with the trouble.

We're heading toward a four-story big mansion on the hill of the same area, not the castle. There's no problem since Baron, Hayuna-san and the others are there.
Of course, the fake hero is also near the baron.

The split body of the demon is also there, but it doesn't get close to the baron. The real body is inside the forest like usual. Seems that it doesn't participate in the battle and only let the goblin soldiers to do it. I wonder if it's enjoying them killing each other?

The carriage enters the rotary in front of the mansion while I'm thinking so.

Although there is no red carpet spread, around 20 maids are lined up on the left and right to greet us.

Although I say maids, they're not wearing aprons or white brims, but just plain navy blue dresses. It's probably a uniform since they all wear the same

clothing.

I can feel Pochi looking around restlessly behind me even though I can't see her. I leave it to Arisa who has warned her in low voice.

"Welcome, I'm happy to have you here. Magician Satou-sama and the ladies."

A single man in butler uniform greets us. I also say thanks for the grandiose reception.
I want ask him why he called me magician not merchant.

"If you have luggage, let me carry them for you."

Since butler-san said so, I hand him over the bag, knife and short cane from my waist. This knife is an ornamental thing to match my clothes, giving off strong feeling.
Butler-san receives only the bag, and gives me back the knife and the short cane.

"Satou-sama, it is alright to bring the dagger and the cane for self-protection."
"Isn't it rude to bring weapons before the baron?"

I check it for the time being, but butler-san slowly shakes his head denying it.

"There is no need to worry. It's an order from the consul. Furthermore, a truly reliable person is on baron-sama's side. Baron-sama won't be hurt unless it's the demon lord who's attacking."
"Hoo, that's amazing. I want to meet that person by all mean."
"I'm sure that you'll be surprised. Please look forward to it."

The one whom this person talks about is surely the fake hero. However, to even permit people who visit bringing sword, I think they're too trusting to that fake hero.
Or maybe the demon's purpose is to let someone harm them?

We follow butler-san who's leading the way. Two maids are following

us. I've thought that they might be knight ladies who are monitoring us, but seeing their levels and skills, they're real maids.

However, I wonder what is this faint incongruity I'm feeling?

◇

We arrive in front of the baron's room guided by butler-san, Arisa tightly clenches her fists. Is she worrying about the dream?
As soon as we enter the room, Arisa sees the baron, and then she relaxes while plainly looking relieved. With this, it seems that she has confirmed that the dream is not prophetic.
Thanks to her relaxing, I've also calmed down a bit. Due to the hit-and-run case a while ago, my mind had been occupied with ominous thought as to how to confront the baron.

Let's confirm the person himself first before making judgment.

"Hey, you're finally here. Cousin-dono, let me introduce them, Satou-dono the magician, and Arisa-dono the merchant. Err, the one over there is Arisa-dono's little sister I guess."

When we get into the room as guided by butler-san, Toruma-shi (ossan) who's in sight, introduces us to the baron.
Come to think of it, I've never said that Arisa is a slave huh. Her collar was hidden by the clothes too, there was no way this KY guy would realize it.
Still, from his standpoint, Arisa is a merchant huh...
However, I'd like to praise him for not ignoring Pochi.

"Nice to meet you, I am an inexperienced magician and a merchant, Satou."

I was a bit lost, but I decided to emphasize on the [Merchant].
Arisa bows while holding up her skirt without giving her name. Pochi also bowing imitating Arisa after looking around restlessly.

There are 3 other man and women inside the room aside from Ossan's family. There were two maids at the corners of the room, but they're not

counted.

First, the man who looks to be the baron, he's a plump man with black hair and mustache. I was expecting that he was a typical detestable guy who's sitting back with outstretched legs arrogantly, but instead, he's sitting with smiling face.

The second is a black-haired woman who has calming atmosphere, looks like she's the daughter. Although she has black hair, her feature doesn't look Asian, but more like a Greek. If I have to say, she is beautiful, but she doesn't have special characteristic beside a mole on the corner of her eye. I cannot see her figures since I can't see it from our position.

And the last one is a macho man who sit on the sofa while leaning to the woman, he's a handsome young man with black hair and black pupils. This young man is the fake hero of course. You can only see him as a refreshing young man on looks alone. He has a straight sword with blue sheath on his white knight clothes. From outside, he's hero enough alright.
His companions are in different building together with the split body (Splitter).

"I see, so you are the young magician-dono who commands the strong demi-human slaves. Thank you for saving Toruma's life. I can't thank you enough no matter how many times I say it.
This territory is only vast and can't be called prosperous, but I'd like you to peacefully rest your fatigue here. It pains my heart that I cannot give you significant service, but I would welcome your stay however long you want."

The baron expressly stands up and goes near me to say thank you.

This is strange.
Normally, nobles are arrogant, yet he's awfully friendly.
On the contrary, that friendliness is too suspicious. I wonder if this person an impostor too?

I confirm by AR, but he's the real one no doubt. There is no abnormal status too.

"Father, I know that you're excited in meeting a brave young man, but can

you sit at least? I feel sorry for the little ones."

This time it's the baron's daughter chiding the baron. Her tone is as calm as her appearance suggests. Her voice is childish unsuited for her age.

Is this how these people usually acts?
With these down-to-earth people ruling the territory, why are the territory people going through such difficult time?

No, they are nobles after all, this might be an act. There might be skills that could make it happen, although the possibility is low, I'll stay cautious for a bit more.

◇

"Oh my, what adorable girls kashira."

The daughter stands up by borrowing the fake hero's hand, and walks toward Arisa and Pochi.

Tayun.
<TLN: たゆん, probably onomatopoeia for swaying, jiggling. Also a Japanese meme it seems.>

Yes, there is no more appropriate representation for it.

My eyes aren't focusing to the baron who's speaking friendly in front of me, but toward the it that sway at the time when the daughter stands up.

Big--No, it's enormous breasts (Bakunyuu) word represented in real life.

The daughter slowly steps forward, and matching her, it sways and shakes, captivating me.

It's truly an art. Brassieres are not wide-spread in this world, so how do such masses are contained, I wonder. Don't tell me, it's magic? It must be magic!

Ouch.

Arisa kicks my leg while I'm thinking stupid things. Arisa glares from below.

"Hello, little lady. I am called Soruna, can you tell me your name?"

The daughter lower her waist to match Pochi's and Arisa's line of sight, and begin to talk with voice that seemingly has musical notes attached at the end. Arisa obstructs my view on the valley with her whole body.

No well, I think right now, it's more important to prevent the young lady from carelessly touching Pochi.

"Pochi nano desu!"
"Cute! I want this kind of girl!"

Pochi introduces herself with the usual "Swoosh!" pose, maybe unable to endure it, the young lady suddenly hugs Pochi.

Arisa tried to pull Pochi from the side, but she didn't make it in time. I could have blocked it faster, but since it looked like it'd end up in a situation where I would have a hard time making up excuse in different sense, I hesitated. Even if I made it in time, her hand would go through the illusion, exposing it.

Pochi who's being hugged by the young lady tilts her head to the side. Pochi who's hugged, happily hugs back while still wearing the expressionless face of the illusion.

"Ara? She feels different from her looks?"

The young lady's hands have gone through the illusion. Excuse is already impossible. Let's use this opportunity to see the true nature of the baron family.
I ask Arisa to release the illusion on Pochi.

"My, the girl turned into a dog girl-san! How cute kashira, she looks like a stuffed toy desuwa."

The daughter who has seen Pochi's figure hugs her without looking disgusted. Tension falls off me and Arisa, Pochi remains to be hugged by the young lady. No wait, it looks like Pochi finds the pressing breasts curious, she's having fun by repeatedly pushing it from below.

How enviable--No, outrageous!

"Oi oi, Soruna, your valuable dress will be full of hair. Moreover, what would you do if you stink of beast?"
"I hate uncle who says such thing desuwa."

Ossan made a rude remark like usual, but lady Soruna curtly refuses Ossan by "Pun", rather than "Tsun", matching her childish gestures.
Ossan is asking for support from the baron, but...

"This is, what a lovely child. Is the appearance up until now a magic?"

The baron lightly ignores Ossan's word, and asks. There is no blaming tone in his words. Rather, it strangely feels pure. I'll leave Ossan to Hayuna-san, and concentrate on the baron.

"I'm very sorry. I've heard a lot about how nobles find beastkin unpleasant, so I considered to at least make her looks like human."

Even though it's my own excuse, it's extremely noncommittal. Normally, you won't even bring her before thinking of disguising with magic.

"I'm sorry that you had to mind that. However, I didn't know that dogkin girl was this cute. I've only seen them at the royal capital and arena, and they all look fearsome like wild beasts. I'll have to revise my thinking with this."

The baron's eyes are fixed to Pochi who's being cuddled by the daughter.

"By the way, Satou-dono."
"What is it?"
"I too want to pat the head of this dog girl-san, may I?"

Pochi shakes her head down while being hugged by the daughter.
I nod at the baron after getting Pochi's permission.

"Oh, isn't it fluffy! Her hair is so nice."
"Besides, she smells really nice. Is this fruits smell? I don't know such natural perfume like this."

Hmm? Fruits smell?
I asked Arisa who's next to me in low voice.

"Mia made sachets filled with fruits peels, and put it together with our clothes."

I see, I don't know well, but it's something like pot-pourri I guess.
I did know that Mia was collecting fruits peels, but I had surely thought that it was for snacks during midnight when she's hungry. I have to be careful not to say this out loud. I would be made to [Seiza] again.

Our meeting with the baron family has unexpectedly ended with cozy feeling, but at that time, rapid development is occurring in the forest.

Even though the baron army should have been advantageous, suddenly victims from their side greatly increase together with the victims from goblin's side. Furthermore, the people who haven't made contact with the enemy are also falling victim one by one. Did the enemy have set up trap from the beginning?
Speaking of something strange, 10 split body had appeared near the main demon body and then, they flew around aimlessly on top of both forces.

I've thought that it might be using poison, but when I check on their status, I understand the cause.

Great majority of the soldiers are suffering with [Confusion], and [Enraged] condition.
I see, now I understand why Arisa had said, "Despised mind magic" before.
It's a standard magic in game, but there's probably few magic that could compare to magic that has no means to be opposed, yet very effective when used against groups.

I'm sure that this method was also used to annihilate the large thieves group.

6-25. Battle of Muno City (3)

Satou's here. A friend of mine who was at his wit's end with job-hunting got caught up in a suspicious seminar, supporting it until he was on the verge of financial disaster.
The history of brainwashing is old. It also happens in the parallel world, but the method is a bit different.

◇

Thanks to Pochi, we've become closer to the baron family, and with Ossan's help, I'm checking various things with the baron, but...

"Then, you didn't issue order to collect congratulatory gifts from the people?"
"Of course. I've heard from the consul that this year we have bad harvest. If we do such things, the people would starve."

In fact, the people are abandoning the children and the elderly.

"Do you know that every village is selling their people to the extent that merchants even avoid them?"
"Fumu, I can't say that every village is prosperous, but we aren't collecting tax to the point that they would starve. And this year, in accordance to consul's suggestion, we should have had shared food to them though?"

The villagers that I've met are all thin, from the serf to the village head. I don't think that the village head is embezzling food.

"There was a girl who jumped out in front of our carriage today. The coachman said that carriages were not to be stopped even if it would kill the civilian who got ran over, is that true?"
"Unfortunately, that's the truth."

Oh, he's affirming it.

However, the baron's face turns gloomy. It totally doesn't look like an attitude of, "Commoners are garbage."

"Satou-sama, there's a reason for that. The year before the last, the carriage that my sister and me got on had crashed into a child. We immediately got off the carriage and went to help the child, but we were surrounded in an instant and almost kidnapped."
"Are you talking about the time we meet? Weren't the children and the people who surrounded you parts of thieves group called Muno Rebel and lurked in the city? It was the consul who told me later that they were thieves though."
"You were wonderful that time."

I'm ignoring the daughter and hero who start to flirt. Moreover, according to the daughter, the same situation happened again for five times afterward. The daughters had only directly involved in the same incident twice, the rest happened to the maids and high ranking officials. Particularly for the last incident involving a high-ranking official, his carriage was deliberately toppled by an attack from the side.
That's strange, although they might have been exterminated already, there is no one who's affiliated with organization called Muno Rebel in this whole city. Of course, since there are underworld people here, it's hard to judge if they're thieves by just looking at their Reward and Punishment, but there isn't anyone who's affiliated with [Thief].

"Is the immigration tax a suggestion from the consul too?"
"Actually, there were incidents where this territory's children and girls from villages got abducted and forced to become slaves in other territories. Per suggestion of the consul, it's decided to put heavy tax on people who aren't legal slave traders or don't have permit from the village head to prevent the crime."

So it was out of good will huh? Any noble wouldn't want their population decrease, so there's probably that utility aspect too.

"Come to think of it, I didn't see soldiers or knights on the gate?"
"Umu, we've received appeal from villagers and merchants about the increasing victims from thieves, so we've sortied the whole army to subjugate them. Since the consul has said that there'd be no problem even if

the thieves attack if the gate is closed shut, I approved the plan."

Okay, doubt.
Didn't he just said that thieves had attacked the carriage inside the city earlier.
Right now, there aren't even 10 soldiers inside the city. There's only person who is a knight. The remaining force is too few, even if the whole army go for subjugation. To be frank, it's unthinkable.

"Is it fine with the thieves who are hiding in the city?"
"It's fine since the consul has said that it's fine."
"Moreover, no matter how many thieves are attacking, I'll exterminate them with this holy sword."

The fake hero follows up the baron's words. After that, he begins to flirt with the young lady again, I ignore it.

The consul huh. He's quite trusted.

Hmm? Now that you mention it, the one who everyone calls [The Consul] could only mean that.
I search the consul on the map. For the whole territory, not just the city.

"If possible, I'd like to meet that consul-sama in person."
"But of course, he's just a bit busy now. He's working in a separate building next to this one. After he's finished with the job, he probably would show up his face."

The separate building huh, there's no consul there. That means, the one they call consul is most likely the demon.
I'll ask his name for the time being and check if he's in a jail or not.

"Everyone has been calling him the consul since awhile ago, but I'm wondering what is the name of the consul?"
"Fumu, what was it I wonder? I'm sorry, I always call him consul so I forget the name. It's one of those things taken with ages."

I try to ask the daughter.

"I should have called him with his name during my childhood, but I often call him consul these days, so I don't remember it."
"I'm sorry, I've always called him consul from the beginning, so I don't know."

The maids don't know either.
Situation like this is normally impossible. It'd be understandable if the one they're forgetting is a person with not much presence, but it's too unnatural that no one knows the name of a top administrative person.

And the strangest thing is--

I look at the people who have answered my questions.

--There's no one who thinks it's unnatural.

◇

"Hmm? What's that?"

The fake hero looks at the opposite side of the balcony and asks a question.
There are a lot of doors as tall as a person leading to the balcony in this room, and they're all open. Since the room is at the top floor of a building on elevated ground, it should have been cold, but it seems that the air flow between the room and outside is blocked with magic called Air Curtain.
It's not only blocked, I wonder what's this strong feeling of being locked.

And, the view on the balcony presents the entire center street from the castle gate to the main gate straight unobstructed.
What the hero wanted to say is probably about the black shadow that look like people looking like grains gushing out at the central street.

Did something happen?

One of the maid says, "I will ask about it", and leaves the room.
From what I see on the map, about 10 skeletons have appeared at two graveyard sites each.

Of course, all the demon's split bodies are in the forest beside the one in the separate building.

I searched the city and found the culprit. There are people who can use [Ghost Magic] near the skeletons.
Since those people don't have abnormal status, they probably have been bribed by the demon who posed as the consul to cause uproars.

It seems that the skeletons are just goading the citizens, they don't kill them even though they're attacking. Yet, a lot of people have noticed the skeletons and they're running from them toward the main gate or the castle gate.
It probably can't be helped considering the history of this city, but there's no doubt that it's also because there are certain people who are leading them among the people.

The others are also coming to the balcony as if lured by the hero.

Next, we are also going to follow the others to the balcony.
Arisa is pulling my sleeves.

"Hey, don't you think that the consul is the one behind this?"
"I do. Incidentally, that guy is a demon."
"De, demon? Your source?"

Dang, I was lost in thought so I answered without thinking.
Well, it's fine.

"There is no consul in this castle. Instead, there's a level 1 split body of the demon."
"Level 1? That's impossible, the main body must be close by."

I might as well tell her the situation.

"The main body is in the forest near the city."
"Wha"
"The 1000-strong baron army was fighting with 3000 demi-goblins there, but they were annihilated due to them killing each other roused by the demon's mind magic. The other 10 Splitters are in the forest creating

zombies. There are around 100 zombies marching toward Muno city in group. Furthermore, the ones hiding in the forest are turning the thieves and beasts into zombies."
"Seriously?"
"Seriously serious."

It's been a while since I use that phrase.
I think I've told Arisa about the map and search... but maybe she has thought that it's only effective for hundreds of meters.
I didn't tell her that it could cover the whole territory since I didn't want her to guess that it's a unique skill.
Oops, I need to tell her a bit more. I convey the details about the demon in succession.

"Th, then, were you going to nonchalantly march into the place where there's a level 30 demon alone?"

Arisa raises her eyebrows and draws near me.

"No well, I'm already doing that, and the main body is in the forest right?"
"Did you forget about the skeleton guy back then? Splitter is split body right? What would you do if the main body has the ability to change place with the split body."

I intend to defeat it when that happens.

"Well, we have a holy sword for that time. Since there are the fake hero and his friends."
"If you're depending on such people, you should have brought Liza-san and the other along too, we could do something even if we're attacked."
"Demons are well versed in magic attack, so I'm worried that Liza and the other would get manipulated."
"Mou, didn't I say that rather than us slaves, you should prioritize yourself more!"

I pacify Arisa who's angry from her worry.
During time like this, I should avert the subject, and steer off the argument.

"Arisa, even if the demon is the mastermind, don't you think that everyone's

condition is strange?"
"About that, it's most likely caused by the demon's mind magic."
"But, no one is suffering with abnormal status you know?"
"That's the part, that's the reason why mind magic is forbidden."

Come to think of it, that demon is the first thing I've seen which has mind magic since Arisa.

"If you repeatedly use mind magic like Trust, cognitive inhibition (Jamming), and common sense manipulation (Lurk) for a long time, it's possible to brainwash people."
"Brainwash?"
"Let's see, if you use magic instilling [Crows are white] to people, eventually when you ask [What's the color of crows?], they'll answer [White]. Lies could become truth if you form easy to believe groundworks with magic. Though of course, there are individual differences."

Rather than fantasy, it's more like some kind of a new religion.

"Is there any way to undo it?"
"That would be difficult. It could be done if we spend our time patiently. It's impossible to remove it with magic in one blow."

It seems there are magic to cancel consciousness manipulation, but it looks like it's hard for magic that has distorted your sense.
Even though there seems to be a way to brainwash in reverse, it would take time.

6-26. Battle of Muno City (4)

Satou's here. If you travel to a foreign country without learning the custom there, you're getting yourself into trouble.
It's a bit more severe in a parallel world.

◇

I hear Pochi saying, "Bones are chasing after people nodesu.", while still she's still hugged by the daughter.

"Bones? Are there skeletons inside the city?"
"Yeah, it seems there are some people who could use ghost magic. The elderly are probably scared of undead because of their experiences with the No Life King's army encirclement during the time of marquis Muno."
"It can't be helped then. It's not like we can help them from here."
"Since there are only 20 skeletons inside the city, I'll do something about them with Remote Arrow, thought it might be futile. I won't aim at the ghost magic users since they would likely die if hit."

I come out to the balcony using different door than the baron and the others have used.

The magic, Magic Arrow which Remote Arrow is derived from is written in the beginner magic book that I've bought.

It is said that [『Magic Arrow』 is the basic and ultimate of magic. The more you master it, the further away it could travel, and the more you could release. If you master it to the limit, and have unlimited magic power, you could destroy the entire army of the whole country with 『Magic Arrow』]. Of course, it's probably exaggerated, but still, when I, who have skill level 10 on it, use it, I could use my map to lock-on the enemies and shoot them. Since the power of one magic arrow is still far weaker than a punch, one arrow could only defeat one level 5 enemy at most. I could shoot 1-125

arrows at once. It consumes at least 10 magic power, and the consumption increases as the number of arrows increases and exceeds certain range. To be frank, it looks to be inferior compared to something like explosion or fireball magic as an anti-army magic.

"Wa, wait, don't tell me you're going to use Remote Arrow?"
"Yeah, I'll shoot it secretly of course."

I stretch a short cane from the position where the baron couldn't see and generate magic arrows to aim at the skeletons. The arrows look like they're made from glasses.

The marks that signify the skeletons on my map are followed by lock-on marks that look like the ones you usually see in aircraft fighter simulators. Lock-on mark is nice. No matter how many time I see it, it stimulates my male instinct.

I set the trajectory of the arrows so it would not enter the field of view of the baron and the others, and launch them. Soon enough, the skeletons in the map are annihilated. Magic sure is convenient huh.

"Hey, hey."

Arisa's voice is trembling.
Dang, is this kind of long-distance shooting normally impossible?

"Don't tell me you could only shoot 20? How could you think of fighting a level 30 enemy with that. Know your place."

Her way of speaking is unusually prickly considering she's Arisa.
Was the number of arrow too low. Looking at the arrow's power, I could easily win just by shooting 20 arrows, but I wonder that since the opponent is a demon, it'd be easy for it to resist elementary magic.

The arrow's number depends on the skill level according to the textbook, so should I just tell her half of my level? Though it's not like I have to keep it a secret, I could just tell Arisa [Hide it] if she looks like she's going to run her mouth. If level 10 could generate 125 arrows then I should tell her that the level is the same as her mind magic skill level, but since that's the level of an

expert, if I say that the level is 4 then being able to generate 50 arrows shouldn't be strange. 10 arrows are enough to defeat the opponent even if it has magic defense anyway, so this excuse should be good enough I guess?

"I could shoot 50 arrows at most. If I'm attacking while drinking MP recovery potion, I could probably defeat it by repeating about 10 times right?"
"Right huh~ if you shoot that many, it's alright huh."

Arisa goes back to the room without saying anything, I pretend not to see her stomping the floor, and she glares at me from inside the room. Tears come out of her dauntless eyes.
The baron and the others are still viewing the city on the balcony. It doesn't seem like they would pay attention here.

"You, by any chance, are you hiding your level?"

Huh? So it was a leading question?
I wonder where I did wrong, I thought that it shouldn't be a problem since firing 50 arrows with each consuming 1 MP should meant that I had 50 MP which should be good enough for level 12.
Well, this is just right for coming out I guess.

"Yes, I'm hiding it. Wasn't it Arisa who told me to hide it?"
"Right, that's right, but to think you could hide level on top of skill."
"But you've guessed well, I only need 50 MP for 50 arrows, there's no strange point in it right?"

Arisa's face freezes, and she lets out a sigh while putting her hand on her forehead. She pauses for a bit, and scolds me in a whisper that sounds like it's been squeezed out. I feel like I'm always scolded by Arisa.

"This careless man!　Know this world's common sense better."
"I understand that I've failed, but which one I did wrong?　Even the magic books say that the arrow could be shot infinitely you know?"
"That's only the 『Theory』. Right now the best magician which is also the founder of this country can only shoot 49 at most."

It's that few huh. Let's only shoot 30 in front of people from now on.

"I could just say that one is an error."
"Not only that, it's impossible to only use 1 MP for 1 arrow."
"It uses at least 10 MP for each shoot. It's just that I only need the same amount of MP until the number of arrow reach 10."
"That's the strange part. An attack magic with the same efficiency as magic arrow among light magic use at least 15MP for each shoot. According to Nana and magic art scientist that I'm acquainted with, it generally needs 5-10MP per shoot. Furthermore you don't even use a long cane, but a cheap short cane that doesn't have magic amplifying or magic power usage reduction effect, if anyone tell me about it, I would have thought that they're just bragging."
"Then, let's make it so it need 10 MP for each shoot."

There's so much difference huh. Then I have to pretend running out of gas after shooting 12 arrows in front of people. This is a bit troublesome.
It seems she doesn't like my answer, she seizes my robe and rub her head on my stomach while saying, "What do you mean by 'then'～". Please stop it since it plainly painful.

"And also! The range is strange too!　The 49 arrows magician that I've said earlier is able to shoot enemies 2 kilometers away, but that's only in grasslands with good views. I've never heard anything like sniping enemies with pinpoint accuracy in this kind of urban area."
"The sniping could be done integrated with the map."
"Ceh, unique skill. I've thought that you're plain, but you have such features hidden. I can't make light of you indeed."

Although she's letting out some questionable remarks, it seems that she has seen through my high level, so it's turned out alright.

"So yeah, it's like that, I've also hid my level, I'm actually high level."
"I understand, I won't ask the detail. I mostly understand from the talk just now."

She did huh, as expected of Arisa. Let's ask in detail next time.
But, it was good that I didn't tell her that I actually could shoot 125 arrows. It looks like she'd feel bad somewhere rather than relieved. She'd think that shooting one arrow more than the best record is a margin of error.

Transported people are generally cheat anyway.
However, I was made to promise to sleep together with her for 1 week as a compensation for all her worries up until now. I've firmly said, "No ecchi.", to make sure, but seems like it'd be difficult to hold the virtue firmly for 1 week.

◇

Yet, the citizens are still gathering near the main gate and the castle gate. Even though the skeletons have been eliminated, do the instigators remain there?

"I, it's terrible! Undead monsters are attacking!"

Butler-san from earlier barged into the room with different expression on his face.

"Calm yourself, Meyer. If it's the Skeletons that have appeared inside the city, it looks like they've been exterminated by the townspeople."
"No, it's different. Swarms of zombies have appeared from the giant forest."
"My, it's scary desuwa."

Are you really scared, daughter-san.

"It's alright, Soruna-hime. I will protect you."
"Yes, my hero-sama."

I'm leaving this stupid couple alone.

The baron and the others go to the balcony that faces the forest, and check the condition over the wall.

"They're coming faster than expected huh. Let's quickly escape from the city. We're too outnumbered. Your magic could do something with hundreds of zombies, but if there are thousands of them, it's impossible right."
"Wouldn't it be easy if we just smash them steadily from inside the wall?"

"There's no way the demon would wait for that. There must be its minions among the people who will lead them to open the gate from the inside, no mistake 'bout it."

Looks like Arisa's prediction is correct. People are fleeing from the main gate. Seems that someone had opened it from inside. I tell Arisa about that matter.

"The demon and its group are heading here."
"Right, it's finally the decisive battle huh."
"Before that, the splitter would get here first. The knight Eral from back then is together with it."
"Who's that?"
"It's the knight who was going to kill Hayuna-san when she was held hostage."
"Uwah, that guy huh. Then won't he cut you if you attack the splitter?"
"Perhaps. I'll prevent it."
"Let's leave it to Pochi. If it's that girl, she could handle attacks from that level of knight easily. You'll be watching the baron's family for any chance of ambush."
"How about I neutralize the splitter with a knockdown?"
"Un, since physical attack might not work on the disguise, I'll do it instead."
"Understood."

I call Pochi, give her a dagger from the Item Box and brief her about the situation. By situation, I only said, "If the knight attack, ward him off." to her.

And then, as if waiting for our preparation to complete, the door opens without even a knock.

"Baron! Consul-sama is coming in."
"Sir Eral. Call baron-sama properly, not me."

Baron comes back from the balcony and see the two who have entered.

"Ah, we've been waiting for you consul. It's terrible, undead monsters are attacking from outside the wall. Maybe No Life King has been revived?"
"Baron-sama, I've arranged a high-speed carriage. Please go together with

hero-sama outside of the baron's territory."
"But then, the people will..."
"It's alright, I'm going to stay in this castle and do something about it."

It'd be troubling if it gets too close to the baron. I should start soon.

"Then, you'll turn all the citizens into undead monsters in the end right, Short Horn demon consul-dono."

Arisa attacks the consul (demon) who turns around with startled face with shock wave.
The consul (demon) helplessly crumples to the floor.
Its figure is that of dark skin with bat wing, truly the figure of a demon.

But, even after seeing that figure, knight Eral shouts.

"You bastard! What are you doing to consul-sama!"

Knight Eral draws his sword.

The split body (splitter) rises.

The daughter screams when she sees the split body.

And the baron and ossan who can't stand up.

The fake hero covers the daughter on his back and pulls out his sword from the blue sheath.

And Pochi, with her dagger, skillfully wards off knight Eral's great sword aimed at me.

With Space Grasp skill, I've understood the things happening in this room.

Right when knight's Eral great sword get stuck on the floor, I kick the blade and break it. Since knight Eral's big body is a nuisance, I knock him out unconscious just like that.

At the present, it doesn't seem like there's any ambush from the baron

family.

Arisa has taken out a long cane before I knew it and point it to the demon. It seems like she can't make her move since the fake hero is fighting the split body (splitter).

"Uuh~ since they're moving around the place, I can't aim with Light Dagger."

Really? They're stopping aplenty you know?

The split body (splitter) stops the fake hero's sword with its claws. It's strong even though it's just a level 1.

"O holy sword Gjallarhorn! Now is the time to grant me the power to defeat this demon!"

I almost burst into laughter unintentionally. Of all things, it has to be that name huh.
The fake hero cuts the split body (splitter) with his magic sword which lets out indigo light. He's succeeded in cutting the claws, but the demon is still going strong.

6-27. Battle of Muno City (5)

Satou's here. Fake and Real, there's this TV program about recognizing the real one, but in a parallel world, since there are skills and magic, it's difficult for the impostor and the identifier.

◇

"Gjallarhorn he said? Don't tell me, it's the real thing?"

Arisa is astonished.
Is that twisting holy sword famous. I'll ask what kind of anecdote it has next time.
The fake hero's sword is also named Gjallarhorn when I see it with AR, however the type is not of holy sword, but magic sword. The explanation is the same as the one I have even though it's just a magic tool. Needless to say, it's a counterfeit. It's only as strong as a normal iron sword, and the appearance is also just a normal straight sword.

"Hero, you dare to strike me with the fake sword I've given to you! Foolish."
"Shut up, demon! Where did you put the real consul!"

I see, so they interpret it like that.

I'd like to stop doing this farce and deal with it as soon as possible, since there's a high possibility that the split body (splitter) is connected with the real body. If I eliminate it with overwhelming force, the real body could be cautious and conceal itself somewhere. It'd be annoying if that happens.
Looks like Pochi is impatient with the fake hero's fighting, she's pulling the hem of my robe.

"Can Pochi fight too?"

Even though the opponent is a demon, it's just level 1. From the look of

thing, it's stronger than a normal level 1, but Pochi should be able to neutralize it while unhurt.

"Alright. Be careful since the enemy can use magic."

The demon screams even though it shouldn't have heard my word.
However, the effect of the magic doesn't materialize.

"Tou! Nano desu."

Pochi who shouts out her fighting spirit slash through the split body with her dagger. She aimed at the shoulder like she's always doing with thieves.
And then, right after the split body (splitter) HP becomes zero, it turns into black dust and disappears.

Pochi sure is strong.

Or rather, the splitter's HP is even less than thieves' so it's over in one hit.

"Amazing desuwa. Pochi-chan."
"To think she's this strong even though she's so cute! The beastkin who has saved Toruma is Pochi-dono right!"

The baron family are praising Pochi.
However, Pochi's ears are fallen. She's coming toward me with heavy step as if she's a remnant of a defeated army. And then, she looks at me with upturned eyes. Little tears are coming out of the corner of her eyes.

"I'm sorry, nano desu. I've killed the dark person."

Wasn't it similar with the gargoyle we had defeated back then?
Perhaps, she might have thought that she's also not allowed to kill strange-looking things.
Though I guess it's also ambiguous for me. I don't want to kill people or demi-humans, but I'm fine with obliterating demons. I guess it's because how they look after all?

I should have dealt with it using Remote Arrow than having Pochi shows such face.

"It's alright, Pochi. Thank you for protecting everyone."

I hug Pochi close and comfort her.

After this disturbance is over, I'll make her eat extraordinarily delicious steak until she gives up eating it, "I can't eat anymore nodesu～."

◇

"Right, we have to save the real consul!"
"That's right desuwa, I wonder where is the consul being held."

Even though it transformed in front of their eyes, the interpretation still became like this. How should I persuade them.

I whispered to Arisa to give her permission. Many records of mind magic that have been successfully used are appearing on the log. It's the same magic used by the demon for making people believe easily. They say to fight fire with fire.

"The demon earlier is the real consul you know."
"What stupid things are you saying?"
"There's no way it's true."
"That's right desuwa."

No one believes the facts spoken by Arisa. Did they resist it?
I should follow up.

"Everyone has been manipulated by the demon's magic. As a proof, no one remembers even the name of the consul right?"
"That is so, but."
"But, if consul-sama isn't here."
"To think that consul-sama was really a demon. Even though he was the first person who recognized me as a hero..."

Oh? They're accepting my opinion now even though they readily denied

Arisa's words? Even though the contents of what I said weren't much different. I wonder if this is the effect of negotiation or persuasion skills?

"Then, do you remember since when was the consul appointed?"
"I don't remember. Was it 10 years ago? No, there was gramp at that time. When did gramp disappear?"
"He was there when Karina came into age."
"Rondol-sama wasn't the only butler. Since when I wonder, the people who were attending here have mostly gone."

Butler-san is also going along with the baron's confusion. Looks like their manipulated memory has been slightly ripped apart from the information and it's starting to come back to them.

I find an underling of the duke in the gaol, and confirm the name to the baron.

"Baron-sama, are you familiar with a honor-viscount called Nina Rottol?"
"Umu, I do. She's a consul candidate which was sent to our territory along with the letter from the lord duke 5 years ago."

He answered smoothly. And then, baron's expression harden after he finished answering.

"Why was it candidate. Our territory already had a consul. But, viscount Nina died of accidental death and I asked the consul from previous generation to take her place..."
"Perhaps, the demon utilized the time when Nina-sama was going to be inaugurated as the consul and used mind magic for manipulation."

However, no one questions why do I have those informations. Unexpectedly, they might be thinking that I'm a subordinate of the duke. Maybe it's the effect of deception skill.

"To tell you the truth, I've got information from the intelligence shop inside the city back then, it's said that Nina-sama and priest-sama have been thrown into the dungeon by the demon."
"How terrible! Viscount Nina! We have to save her immediately."

Baron-sama instructs butler-san to save them each.
Now then, the domestic affairs of this territory should manage somehow with this. I pray that the person called Nina-san is an able person.

◇

Then next, I have to deal with the flood of people who rush out to the gate now. The best way to do it is by asking Arisa with her mind magic, but there should be agitators planted by the demon inside the people. It doesn't seem like they have some strange assassination skills, but I'm afraid that they would cause panic to the crowd and make them stampede her to death.

It won't be a problem if I go with her, but it's certain that the demon would quickly try to go back here from the forest after the split body died. I don't want to leave this place for the sake of thoroughly deal with it. I could aim it from anywhere with Remote Arrow, but if by any chance it could defense against it, it'd be hard to shoot again, so I don't want to leave this place for the sake of ensuring the next attack.

Of course, I have no plan of sending only Arisa and/or Pochi to the crowd alone. I'm sorry for the citizens, but I put the safety of Arisa and Pochi more than the citizen's.

Let's ask the fake hero to take the full brunt here.
It's originally his role anyway, let's make the people from baron's side to work hard for this part.

"Hauto-dono, if you want yourself to be called hero from now on, I'll have you show the proof. Give courage to the people who have been chased by the undead and gathered in front of the castle's gate."
"I understand. I have no intention of being used by the demon to the end. I will become a hero with my own power. I'll become a man befitting of this Gjallarhorn."

The fake hero replied my high-handed words with passionate speech.

"It's wonderful, my hero-sama."

"Ah, my love. You're still calling me hero."
"Yes, ever since you save me from the mob, you've always been my hero desuwa."
"Then, let's go together! To calm the citizens!"

And then, the two leave the room together, is that fine? To take the ojou-sama before the wild citizens.

"Satou-dono, the citizens in front of the castle gate is being taken care of, but what should we do about the monsters outside the wall."

You're asking that to an outsider, baron.

"Cousin-dono, there's no way we could win against such army. Let's get away with the high-speed carriage that the consul earlier, no, was it demon, has said."
"I can't do that Toruma, even though I'm called useless, I'm still the lord of this territory. There's no way I would escape and throw away the citizens."

Even Hayuna-san doesn't know what to do, she's holding Mayuna-san while looking very anxious.
What Ossan has said is normal view, but that carriage has been used by the hero's companions to escape. It looks like there's a hidden passage for escaping. There are a lot of zombies at the exit of that passage, but I let them to do something about it themselves.

"Shouldn't there be weapons or magic tools for defense in a castle this big?"
"They existed during the time of Marquis, but they were destroyed during the incident 20 years ago. When the territory became of Baron, there were many plans for revitalizing, but they were postponed because we're not fighting against other country."
"Then do you have tactical scrolls?"
"We had been given them from Toruma's house, but by the suggestion of the consul, they were sold to buy food that were to be distributed to the citizens."

Darn you demon, so thoroughly prepared.
Still there's a person who would buy tactical scrolls which should be for war. I wonder if it was other noble?

"Then, please signal the army that have came out for thieves subjugation to come back somehow. Let's keep the citizens inside the castle until the army come back."

The army has been annihilated, but the baron doesn't know such thing and I don't intend to tell him. For the time being, the citizens should become less anxious if they're withdrawn inside the castle.

The baron tells the maid about the matter to signal the army to come back.

"I understand, the inside of the castle fortress is the safest. Let's evacuate the citizens there. The hero should have calmed down the citizens before the castle gate. I will go there and tell the people that I'm accepting them to the castle. People should feel relieved to see a coward like me remain right?"
"Alright then cousin-dono. I'll go with my family and the servants to the fortress first and make preparations there."
"Thank you, Toruma. Please persuade people who have been freed from the gaol to remain in the fortress."
"I understand. Satou-dono, you lot are coming too."

Baron and co leave the room while saying so. I tell Ossan who's late that we will remain here.
The maids bring manservants to carry the fainted knight Eral away on their shoulders.

"Then, what would you do? It'd be impossible even with your magic since the opponents are too many right? I'm not able to use ranged light magic, so putting aside an opponent that's simply strong, I don't have enough power to fight against so many enemies you know?"
"It's fine, reinforcements are coming."

I tell Arisa who has wondering face that the giants from the forest depth are coming here.

"Something like giants, where are they appearing from."
"They have a village deep inside the forest."
"That's not it, aren't they the demon's forces?"

"They're probably different, it seems that the second daughter that knight Eral was looking for, requested for the reinforcement. She's together with them."

I point at the forest while saying so. If you see it closely, the trees are shaking.

Looks like the zombies have reached the main gate, and the crowds are rushing from the main gate to the castle gate. Fortunately the zombies are slow, so there's no citizen who get caught up and killed. Please pardon me real zombie movie. I'm weak against gross thing.

I stealthily deal with fast zombies of beast or birds mixed in the zombies flock with remote arrows.

Since the forest trees are shaking awfully, I check on the giants' conditions which have became [Confusion]. Please no fighting against each other happening to even the giants.

However, there's a more pressing matter than that.

"Arisa, something bad has happened."
"What is it now, did the demon lord attack too?"

That one might be emotionally better for me.

"Liza and the others are closing in the zombies on the main gate."

6-28. The Girls' Battles

◇Lulu◇

Hello, Lulu here.
What should I do. Liza-san is acting strange since awhile ago.

"Call the village chief!"
"Who are ya. I ain't getting ordered by a beastkin."

Liza-san strikes the ground with her spear wrapped in cloth.
Even her wagon driving to this village was rough. I think she really wanted to go together with master like Arisa after all?

The villager-san with big body is trying his best to oppose Liza-san, but it seems that only his word is big without courage. His feet and voice are shaking.

Thankfully, a boy is leading a gentle-looking man here while running. That kid was the kid who ran toward the village earlier. It looks like he's called the village chief.

"Well then, what exactly is your demand? As you can see, our is a poor village, we're short in food let alone treasures."

Exactly like chief-san has said, the children, and the man earlier look famished.

"We don't need treasures or food. My great lord desires stones that look like this. Prepare 100 of it immediately."

Mou, Liza-san, it's already completely not on the level of negotiation. Nana-san too, please don't only look from the side and do something about it.

I desperately try convey it with my eyes, but it doesn't reach Nana-san. She

looks over here and tilts her neck. Mou!　It's unfair to be that cute on top of being a beauty.

I turn my head at the back to look at Tama-chan and Mia-san who are the remaining ray of hope, but....

Mia-san!　Please don't play around with Tama-chan!　Moreover, isn't the string you're using to play the matching one that master has bought!　Ah, Tama-chan's nails are, aah, mou!

When I'm agonizing over that, the negotiation is over. Village chief-san is directing the children and the young people carrying baskets and the like toward the river.

To think they're doing the collecting after that, what kind of magic did Liza-san use?

◇Tama◇

Muu～n. Liza is tingling nyan.
That end-sentence Arisa's taught has became a habit. What to do, if I say it out loud, master would worry.

Seems she's worried for master who has gone to the place of that monster called noble or something.

Liza and Arisa are such worrywarts.

Even though it's alright, since master is the strongest of the strong. No matter what kind of monster appears, swoosh, he'd move, zudodon, he'd beat it.

Flop, I lie down and Mia hang a string in front of my eyes.

How rude. I'm not the same Tama who's always, always lured.

Chorochoro.

Piku.

Choro. Chorochoro.

Endure. I'm the onee-san. I must endure here.

Shururu～n.

Tou♪

Hah ah, I've been entangled in the string when I noticed.
Mia's string technique must be the secret art of fairies, no doubt.

◇Village Chief◇

Good grief, I shouldn't have have married into the village chief's house.

I've grown used with sending away thieves, brown-nosing the tax collector, and letting off the territorial army's coercion though.

The eyes of that scalekin are like fangs. I thought that I'd be eaten from the head.

Moreover, when she struck the spear on the ground earlier, the cloth came loose. My heart was grasped just looking at that. That's a magic spear for certain. Back then, the merchant that came--I knew that he was actually a thief in disguise, and he let everyone off if I just gave him offering--had said.

There's a demi-human scarier than monsters hunting thieves on the highway.

It was a scalekin wielding a magic spear glowing red accompanied by two beastkin subordinates. It seems they could tear through any kind of trap, and crush ambush no matter where it was hidden as if they could see it.

I was trembling in fear thinking that she would consider this village which

was doing transaction with thieves the same as them, but it looks like that's not it.

The girls tells us to give her 100 pebbles.

"Even though you say that you want pebbles, it's not like pebbles are our local specialty products so... "
"No more dialogs. It can be gathered at the river ahead. It's the same red pebbles. I will wait until noon. Prepare them immediately."

I ask the kid who's looking here curiously, it seems that the pebbles are lying around the riverbank and the riverbed. If it's not a rare thing, let's quickly gather 100 of it and have them get out of the village.

I order the children and the serfs to collect the pebbles at the riverbank. It could probably finish in 1-2 hours if there are 20 people.
To prevent angering the quick tempered girls, I have to be here until after the pebbles are collected.

Ach, my stomach hurts.

◇Lulu◇

"Okay. No. No. Okay..."

Tama is selecting the pebbles in front of me.
The villagers have gathered more than 100 pebbles after 1 hour, but they're not only bringing the right one, there are also red stones that only look beautiful mixed in. They've only gathered around 30-40% of the intended stones.

"Achoo."

I turn toward the sneeze sounds, and see a girl with violet lips and her whole body trembling . When I look closer, her hem and feet are wet.
They're probably entering the river in this wintry sky to look for the stones.

Apparently they've been going to the river 2-3 times to collect stones for Tama-chan to see. Everyone looks thin and seems to not have stamina. I'm worried that they might catch cold, suffer from pneumonia and die.

That's right! Let's treat them with risotto that master has taught me some time ago. That should be good for warming and filling them up. Master has said that we're free to use ingredients in the wagon, so there's no problem with it.
However, the pot is too small maybe.

"Na, ma'am, Liza-san. I'd like to treat everyone from the village with risottto, is it fine?"

I've almost said Nana-san like usual out of habit. I'd like to be called ma'am too someday. Of course the husband is--

"Lulu? We can't use the food without permission from master... No, we've been given permission have we. However, if the ones eating are us then it's fine, but aren't you interpreting the permission too broad by treating other people?"
"No, I think there's no problem if we treat the people cooperating in collecting the pebbles."
"I understand. Na, no, ma'am, how about it?"
"Execution is permitted."

Looks like Liza-san almost called her Nana too. It's easy to be mistaken there right.
Nana-san is the same like always.

With Liza-san's help, we make stove by lining stones, and put the pot on the fire. At first the villagers are looking at us suspiciously, but after the smell of the boiled cereal spreads in the air, they begin to surround while watching us in a distance. I put assorted cereal and vegetables, small slices of dried meat, and lastly cut the cheese in long thin shaving and melt it, it's complete.

I put the risotto in bowls that Nana-san has asked the village chief-san to prepare. I pass the bowl to the children who bring the pebbles, they look shocked.

Ara? I wonder if they don't like cheese?

"Do you dislike cheese?"
"I've never eaten one."
"It's delicious you know? Eat carefully since it's hot."

When I said that, the child repeatedly look at the bowl and my face and finally look to village chief-san to ask for the decision.

"Even if you give us such luxurious thing..."
"There is no problem."
"It's thanks for these red pebbles."

Nana-san quickly answered vilage chief-san's question. After village chief-san approves, the children begin to sip the bowl. I forgot to pass the spoons.

"Hot, delicious."
"It's warming me up."
"I don't get to eat this even during festivals."
"Un, delicious."

The children are eating vigorously as if their mouths are burning.
The adults have also gathered before I'm aware of it. There's also a person who said, "Oy, give father one too.", among them. That's no good you know? Taking the children's shares.

"Hey, jou-chan. If I gather the pebbles, are you going to give me those porridges too?"
"Yes, it'll warm you up."

The adults begin to run toward the river after hearing me. Seeing that, the children give the bowl that has been licked clean back while saying thank you, and begin to run toward the river.

Err, I wonder how many people are there.

I'm worried if we could do it, but Nana-san negotiates with the village chief to allow us to use the kitchen in his house. We have plenty of the

ingredients, and it looks like the village's housewives are going to help too.

Now, let's do our best to make the meal.

6-29. The Girls' Battles (2)

◇Tama◇

Meal~?

Risotto is tasty, but I think the meat that master grills are the best.

Always tasty steak of wolf meat~

Stir fried vegetables with chicken meat, more meat~

I want to eat grilled frogs again♪

What's tooooday's meal I won~ der~♪

...Nyu? Today's meal?

Nyu, nyunyu?

Ah!

I understand Liza's worry maybe.

As it is now, noon will pass, while master is still away~?

Unyu~
At that time, if I didn't use scissor for janken, I could had gone together...

Aah, today's lunch is.

The meat that master makes~~~!!

◇Nana◇

The reasoning circuit reports that the probability of completing the mission has broken through 100%.

On the command queue, there is no next directive given by master.
Let's go back to the normal routine.

Self-diagnostic.... No problem. There is no need for MP supplement--there should be no need to, but master's face floats in my mind. I wonder what is this loop in my logic circuit.

It's alright. I've learned that if I look at Pochi or Tama when this happens, the loop will be canceled.

Tama is rolling around while watching Lulu's cooking. She's very cute. Is this cat-rolling? Cat-doting? Unfortunately it seems there's no fitting vocabulary in my preset.

After I've finished delighting myself with Tama, the disorder with logic circuit is fixed, I move to the next sequence.

Diagnosing each individual member...

Mother is stable.

There's also no problem with Lulu who's currently cooking.

Tama is cute.

Liza is.... Error.

It seems Liza has been accumulating stress after she's separated with master.
This stress has something to do with that thing called nobles. They were the top elimination targets of the previous master. I've never seen one, but I could deduce that they're like monsters.

However, according to my logic, there is no chance that master would fall.

He's the master who won complete victory against the strongest iron golem of that maze in the blink of an eye. Even if he fights against the army, he would probably come back unhurt.

I cannot understand the reason for Liza's accumulated stress, but I know the solution to relieve it.

"Liza, go to where the master is."
"But then, I will go against master's instruction."
"No, master's instructions are, 『Give works to the villagers』, 『Collect 100 red pebbles』, and 『We do not collect the pebbles ourselves』, only those three points. After we got the cooperation of the villagers, the mission's completion is only a matter of time. There is no problem even if Liza go to where master is."
"However, the wagon's guard..."
"What master wants to protect at all cost is not the wagon, but Lulu. I will stay to guard Lulu, so bring Mia and Tama along to aid master."

Liza hesitates for a bit, but then she goes to the city riding horse together with Tama and Mia.　I go to Lulu to support her.

I am Nana. The seventh generation homonculus cultivated in the seventh adjustment tank.

Cooking, sleeping together, babysitting, shopping, inspecting workshop. Even inside the library of the previous generations before No.7, there are no experience this varied.

I wonder what kind of experience I will have under master from now on. That is, yes, I'm truly looking forward to it.

◇Tama◇

"Tama, Mia, let's go to master's place. Prepare in 30 seconds."
"Nn."
"A～ye."

Yay, today's lunch is going to be grilled meat that master makes.

Bururun, the horses are spirited too.

Looks like the horses want to eat master-made meal too.

I stand on the stool and put the saddle on.
I'm already used to it hum.

"Tama, the girdle of that saddle is loose. You'd fall like that."

Liza's check is harsh like always.

◇Liza◇

I lead Tama and Mia to leave the village.
If Nana didn't push me, I probably would be still feeling irritated while staying in the village. I have to thank her somehow next time.

Of course I know that master is strong.
He led the three of us who were nothing but drag through series of battles inside the labyrinth, and even taught us how to fight monsters.

However, nobles are different. They're not enemies that could be fought with simple power. Even my father who was the strongest in my tribe got deceived by nobles and fell into slavery regardless of his accumulated techniques.

"Liza~?"
"Ahead."

I pull myself together after hearing Tama's and Mia's voice. There are 10 cavalry soldiers a bit further away from the entrance of the village. They're not wearing full body armors like knight, but they're wearing breastplates like Tama and me and helmets. Their outfits are too uniform for mercenaries, their disciplines look good too. I wonder if they're with the army?

They're in the way.

◇Mia◇

"Let's force our way."
"Nn."

I nod to Liza's word, but isn't it impossible? It's impossible right, there are so many of those cavalries. What should we do? What should I do, it seems that Liza intends to break through the soldiers to the forest, but won't the horses get pushed down? They're going to get pushed down right, I should somehow move them aside I guess? That's right! There should be a way to repel them.

It's the one from when I played magic with Arisa--

"■■■ ■■■ Water Cast"
"■■■ ■ ■ Balloon"

Thanks my smooth-talking practice with Satou, it feels that my chanting has become neat. It's become neat right?

I create water belts from the water on the water bags, and stretch them toward the soldiers. I make the magic that looks as if it's chasing something to [Evaporate].
The soldiers' route slightly shift since they're being pressured by something invisible.

Did it work? It worked! Arisa is amazing for arranging something like this for the sake of drying her wet hair. But, this spell for drying wet hair is a secret to Satou alright? It's a secret. I mean, I like having my hair dried with towel by him.

"Liza, now."
"Understood! I'll break through the column."

I apologize briefly to the soldiers on the side Liza is breaking through.
But, what should I do?　The cavalries are chasing from behind. Are they angry for being pushed?　They're angry right.

Mou!　Please don't chase us with scary faces!

◇Karina◇

"Karina-dono, it seems that zombies have appeared on the front."
"My, they're in this forest so close to the city's wall, I'm surprised desuwa."
"Umu, the demon most likely is planning something."
『There is no need to worry, o small one. In front of us, they're no different to fallen leaves. Trampling them down is easy.』

My dialogs with Raka-san is replied by the head of wood giant--Ishizuchi-san. I've asked his name, but it's really, really long, it's rude and it looks like he'd hit me if I shorten it so I call him with that nickname, "Ishizuchi-san". This person's speak in very heavy low voice, it vibrates my stomach. I've never heard the language, but thanks to Raka-san, every word is heard in Shiga language to me. Raka-san is really great desuwa.

Raka-san and me are riding on the shoulder of Ishizuchi-san. It's almost like I've become a child, it's fun desuno. Sir Zotor is riding on another giant's shoulder. I've been told that the reason why they don't let two people ride on both shoulders is because it'd be hard to recover if they lost their balance.

This is the first time I see something like zombies, it's sickening things. Ishizuchi-san and other wood giants eliminate them by trampling them as if they're ants.

Ara?　When I look closer, aren't those armors of baron's army?

I wonder why, Ishizuchi-san who should be reliable suddenly looks hateful.

Ah, why do I raise my arm?

And then, toward Ishizuchi-san who should be my ally, from the side, my fist is--

◇Mia◇

"Coming ahead~"

Is there anything in front where Tama points?　Says it. Eeh, you're lying, lying, a lot of people are running on the road as if clogging it?　No, not that, they're escaping.

What should I do, what should be done?　Swelling is no good, no good I say. If I use that magic, some people will get hurt right? They absolutely will.

Is there nothing?　There should be something. That's right, I should ask for help from the forest, it's a small forest, but Lia has said that we're connected with forest, that's right, Raya has also said that.

Then, let's ask it immediately?　No, Lia also said some other things.

『You can't ask for help from the forest until after you've become an adult and have learned forest magic alright?　You'd get your magic power sucked dried by the gluttonous dryad you know?』

That's right, I'm sure she's said that. Ah, but, we're going to clash like this, Liza will surely go straight at them. That girl would do anything in order to meet Satou.
There's no time is there, there is no time.

"O forest, please!"

I ask as hard as possible. I don't want to have my magic power sucked dry, but I'll ask Satou to supply me with it like Nana. It's hard to throw away the idea to have magic supplied by mouth-to-mouth method like Arisa's said.

『I'll comply~, you can leave the charge for later, little bornean-chan.』

Childish voice is heard from the trees as if drowning others', a road between trees appears beside the crowd.

"Liza, forest."

With just that, Liza turns the course there. She's turned. She believes my words earnestly.

Now, let's go meet Satou.

6-30. The Girls' Battles (3)

◇Knight◇

"Oy oy, dividing the forest like that, what the heck are they."
"Captain."
"I know. Oy, you guys, follow the ladies before the forest closes."
""""Understood."""

My subordinates answer with good spirit to my words.
I've heard rumor before that says elves are able to freely make paths on forests. I thought that it was just some stupid drunken talks, but looked like it was true. This is just right, I'll make use of it to slip through that crowd.

Still, what's happening to baron Muno's territory? Looking at the appearance of those crowds, there's no mistake that they're people from Muno city.

Do hordes of monsters attack from the forest?
If it's that then they should have barricaded themselves inside the city, what actually happen anyway.

By the order of the duke, I've thought that this would be an easy job of just meeting his nephew couple, but feels like this has become an unthinkable military outing.

◇Tama◇

Nyu!

Path springs out of the forest~?

It looks like secret art of fairy, I'll ask Mia to teach me next time.

I'll be taking lots of prey freely~♪

When I stand on the horse to dance, "It's dangerous, sit down.", I've got scolded by Liza.

Could Liza see from her back~?

Huh?

Ahead, at the opposite side of the forest, I could see dark people behind the people who are running away on the highway?

Ah, an old woman fell.

A dark monkey-like thing bares its fang, bullying the old woman.

Don't bully the old woman.

I throw a stone from atop the horse.

Aah, the dark person's head disappeared.

Will master scold me?

Green blood are coming out of the dark person, looks like it's a monster.

Safe.

◇Liza◇

"Mia, to the highway."
"I understand."

Mia connects the path to the highway.
I want to quickly go to master's place, but I wouldn't want to show my face in front of master after abandoning people of the same race as master.

Master even gave mercy to thieves. He probably would not abandon innocent people.

I put magic power into the magic spear. After master reforges it, it feels like an extension of my arm. It feels as if my nerve is connected until the tip, I could wield it freely.

"With me holding this spear, I won't let you through."

A small fry which has passed through with its fast leg is already being dealt with by Tama. I'll leave that side to her.

The enemies are swarm of zombies.

"Mia, bow and arrow don't work on these things. Please support me with magic."
"Nn."

The magic spear slays the zombie which are swarming in group like it's mowing them. Normally, this is not how you should use spear, but thanks to the effect of magic blade that manifests when the magic spear is put with magic power as in accordance to what master has taught me, I could cut them as if they're dead trees.

If it was a normal spear, this careless handling would had broken it a long time ago.

"We're helping ya, scalekin nee-san."

Looks like the cavalries who have been following us from behind are going to participate in the battle.
It's fine as long as they don't get in the way....

◇Karina◇
<TLN: Sorry, I've mistranslated the part where 'arm is raised', it should've been Karina who does it, not the giant, she's going to hit the giant instead of the other way around. Really sorry about this.:(>

My fist was stopped before it hit Ishizuchi-san.

"Raka-san, why are you stopping me?"
"Karina-dono, it's an attack from the demon's magic. Come back to your sense."

When the magic tools of Raka-san shine blue, the hatred inside me disappears as if being washed away.
Besides me, it seems that young wood giants and sir Zotor are affected by the magic.

The giants who are affected by the magic are pinned down by other giants.
Sir Zotor is violently raging while being held upside down by his feet.

I'm a bit disappointed.

"Ishizuchi-dono, hit to the front left."
『Acknowledged.』

Ishizuchi-san hits a tree nearby hard.

It was surprising.

Several dark people who have bat wings emerged from the place that should had been empty. Later when I ask Raka-san, it's not that the demons become invisible, but they disguise themselves as trees. It seems that it's called mimicry. They're like insects desuno.

"Kuhahaha, young lady, some unthinkable reinforcements you"

In the middle of the demon's talk, BAM, accompanying that sounds, the demon is sent flying to outside the forest.
Giants are short tempered. A female giant beside Ishizuchi-san hits and sends all the dark demons flying using an enormous club. It's as if the woodcutter beskyuu that comes out in the folklore.

Most of the dark demons have become dark rubbish after the attack, but one of them recovers and stands still in the air.

"That's the real body, Ishizuchi-dono, let's go!"
『Yeah』

However, the situation advances even before Ishizuchi-san moves.
Many little light that come out of nowhere are surrounding and bustling around the demon. It looks very beautiful, although my impression may be out of place.

"Ridiculous, it's impossible."
"Raka-san, what is going on?"
"That's a tactical level magic that belongs to advanced grade of magic art. Karina-dono, is there an exceptional magician working under the baron?"
"No, there's only one person who can use intermediate level magic, but there is no one who can use advanced level."

From the opposite side of the glittering light, a blue light dazzle for an instant. And then it immediately disappears to the horizon while drawing blue trace of light.

And then, the demon which should have been inside the glittering light is lost.

"Did it escape?"
"That's not it."

Raka-san answers with a voice that sounds as if it's squeezed out.

"Is it not?"
"The demon has been destroyed. No, it was destroyed from the attack of the holy sword just then. Ridiculous, unbelievable."

Holy sword?
Is the sword of that impostor really a holy sword after all?
No, that can't be possible. Or maybe, the real hero has rushed here?

"Maybe it was the real hero?"
"I do not know, but the problem is not about that, Karina-dono. The attack from the holy sword earlier wasn't normal. That was a forbidden technique

of making magic tools ran wild by supplying it with excessive magic power in order to increase its attack power. It's unthinkable to make holy swords disposable. Just who in the world is it."
<TLN: Also known as broken phantasm in nasuverse :p>

I am bothered by the thing about holy sword that Raka-san has said, but more than that, it's about the hero-sama. There are two holy swords in this country, but there's only one hero in the entire world. I think it's important to know if the one who has used the holy sword is the hero or not. I wonder what kind of person it is?

"Can't Raka-san see it?"
"It's too far so the power to see through can't reach it, but it seems to be a person wearing a silver helmet. Moreover, he has a golden sword, that's probably a holy sword."

That impostor didn't wear something like silver helmet. Furthermore, the sword that he had shown was letting off blue light that didn't have the feeling of mystic. It was vague at that time so I got deceived, but that sword can't be the twisting Gjallarhorn. If it's about holy sword, I could easily talk for three days straight you know?

"Raka-san, let's find out his true identity!"
"Wait, Karina-dono. First, we have to eliminate zombies that have overflowed the city's outer perimeter."
『Don't mind it, we have no more duty after the demon is destroyed. You can leave the disposal of the zombies to us and the knight.』

I take advantage of Ishizuchi-san's favor and let him take me down on the outer wall of the city.

However, was there a holy sword with golden blade?

◇Knight◇

"Oy, that scalekin's spear is the real deal, the heck is that?"
"It's amazing eh, it's used like an axe even though it's a spear. Moreover,

looks like that light is from the magic blade."
"Uhhya~, just like the duke's imperial guard huh."
"Not just that, look at the horse of that little one. What is that? The little one is throwing stones that always hit its target while standing on the saddle, and the horse moves on its own to near the zombies and kick them."
"Isn't that normal for a war horse?"
"There's no way that fatty a war horse right? That's Gontsu species usually used for cart you know?"
"Oy, this isn't the time to be careless, something really dangerous has appeared from the interior."

My subordinates are properly defeating the zombies even though they're bantering, but we should brace ourselves since a dangerous enemy seems to have appeared.
If I remember right, that should be a hydra. Since it looks like a zombie, it'd be good if it could not use breath.

"Donovan, breath might come out, please use Air Shield if that happen."
"Understood, though I'm just saying that it'd be just a temporary measure against breath."
"I don't mind, better than nothing."

◇Mia◇

Mou!Just how many are they? Even though Liza and the cavalries should have defeated around 100 of them, they're still coming. It's really coming.

"■■■ ■ ■■ ■■■ Water Screen"

Dangerous. Really dangerous.
Behind the zombies, a snake with lots of neck was breathing fire. Surprising, I was really surprised.

But, but, I had wonderfully prevented it with water screen. Prevent you know. It'd break if I defended against it straight, so I had just warded it for a bit. I came up with it when I saw Pochi and Tama warded off Liza's spear. I had just put it into practical use you know?

◇Knight◇

The fire breath from hydra destroyed Donovan's Air Shield like it was crumpling paper, but a water screen casted from somewhere and formed in the interior repelled it.

"Oy, oy, yer' losing to that child over there."
"That one's an elf you know? She has lived several times ours even though she looks like that, she's a proper lady even though she's small."
"You don't mind even if you lose huh?"

Even while they were bantering, they kicked the pseudo-goblin zombies which was attacking from below.
Even that girl's magic won't be usable indefinitely. It gradually declines every time it receives the attack. There's no choice but to use Donovan's Air Hammer to secure the gap before the Hydra.

6-31. The Girls' Battles (4)

◇Liza◇

There's no end to this.

I probably have defeated dozens of zombies already. Even though I could defeat many with just a swing of my spear, their number is beyond expectation.

We've reached the place where I can see the city's gate after some struggling, but there are still more than 100 zombies infesting the area until the gate. It's easy to deal with goblins or thieves zombies, but it's a hard fight against bear or other monsters zombies that sometimes get mixed in.

On top of that, there's even such thing!

The multi-headed snakes that appears from behind the zombies, it's most likely not just big. It spits out fireball as if a dragon.
Thanks to Mia's magic, we're narrowly saved, but it's probably not something that could be defended for many times. I have no choice but to make the first move and take care of it quickly. For that to happen, I have to cut the distance to the multi-headed snake.

"Mia, the road!"

Mia should understand that. Mia uses the magic that she has used to push aside the soldiers earlier to push the zombies away and make a path among the zombies.

I load every ounce of the small magic power I have into the magic spear--

◇Lulu◇

I could hear noises from the direction of Muno city.

I wonder if Liza-san and the others are alright?

We've gathered 100 pebbles just a bit ago. No, it's nearly 200. Everyone seems to have been really eager for the risotto.
Right now I'm learning cuisines of this region from the housewives who have helped me. I will surprise master later.

"Was it okay to have offered so much food for us?"
"There is no problem."

When I was tasting the finished food, the tall and thin village chief came.
Nana-san is supporting me. I'm really still not good with other guys beside master.

"Chief! It's terrible, refuges are rushing here from Muno city."
"What'd you say!"
"For now they've stopped in front of the village, but there are more than 100 people."

It seems that Arisa's worry has become real.
What should I do.

◇Knight◇

The scalekin nee-san begins her assault followed by red afterglow.
What great courage.

"Oy, let's widen the path the elf lady has opened."
"Righto."
"Vice-captain, go assist nee-san."

At any rate, that's the magic that we have got struck by, but I have no idea that you could use water magic like that. Some secret arts of elves huh.

"Donovan, there might be other hydra around, search for it with magic."
"Yes, captain."

Hopefully, it's just an unfounded fear.

◇Liza◇

I pierced the body of the multi-headed snake with an attack that used my whole body accompanied with roars.
I had the spiral spear attack that master had demonstrated to me once in mind while performing the attack, but as expected, I couldn't do it overnight.
Even so, looks like I've succeeded in neutralizing one of the multi-headed snake's head.

However, I cannot be discouraged.
My magic power has been depleted, my forged body body is the only thing remaining.

Pierce.

Parry.

When I see a chance, I deliver a heavy blow.

I was dubious since the attack from the snake was few, but before I knew it, a soldier wielding two sword was handling two of the snake's heads.

Some rotten goblins jumps out from under the flank of the multi-headed snake, but stones that flies from behind hit their heads, crushing it. Seems that Tama is also covering me firmly.

The two-swords soldier is quite skillful for a human.
Of course, he's still far away compared to master, but he wields those swords like he's dancing.

"Liza, here."

Mia who gets down from the horse passes me a bottle of potion. I still have no use for health recovery potion though?

"Magic power recovery."

I see.
I gulp down the bottle, and swallow the slightly sweet liquid. Is this how it feels when you recover your magic power. It feels a bit different from when you recover your health.

With my magic spear, I parry the multi-headed snake that has attacked after seeing the chance. One of my arm feels slightly hot sensation.

Looks like Mia casts balloon magic from my side. Green mist bursts out from below of the multi-headed snake's abdomen, toppling it down. It seemed that she made use of the multi-headed snake's blood that was on the ground.

Magic blade--wrapping the magic spear with red light.

While shouting with spirit, I drive the magic spear to the weak spot of the multi-headed snake that Mia has exposed, its stomach.

That big body wriggles for several times, and then it stops moving. This powerful enemy was not defeated with my power alone. Friends' power are great aren't they.

◇Mia◇

As expected of Liza nano. Liza is great right.

She could defeat such big multi-headed snake.
It's alright even without Satou. It's alright.

Yes, I was thinking such thing.

But reality is terrible. It's terrible!

Three similar snakes have appeared from the other side!　What should we do? What should we really do. It was that hard just to beat one of them!

◇Knight◇

"Although vice-captain did great too, that nee-san defeated the hydra hey."
"Let's work hard until we reach the gate."
"But those swarms of zombies are continuing until the opposite side of the outer wall."
"Good grief, just where are they coming from."
"It can't be that No Life King has been revived right."

However, the room for our mundane chattering is over.

"Captain, three of them are coming from the interior."

I grimace at Donovan's report. Why does my bad hunch have to be proven right like this?
Three hydras come out from the interior.

"I, when this job is over, I will marry Pina-chan from the kitchen."

The fool is already escaping from reality.
There's no choice but to retreat here. Since Donovan is already tired of firing Air Hammer, we have to retreat in one stretch.

◇Liza◇

Those are impossible indeed.
Even though I could have reached to where master is in just a bit more....

I have force myself here as to not let Mia and Tama get injured.

I'm worried whether the human soldier earlier has escaped far enough, but we have no choice but to withdraw here. However, I wonder if we could get away safely with such enemies?

Let's preserve magic power for now.
The red light on the magic spear that I've stopped supplying with magic power grows dim. As if reflecting my weakness, I feel unpleasant.

◇Tama◇

I'm covering the last line of defense together with the horses.

It's another fire-spitting snake. This time there are three~?

If I'm not mistaken, it's said that if they're turned into kabayaki, it's delicious. What's kaba I wonder?
<TLN: See kemm's excellent explanation in the comment section.>

Haah, my stomach is hungry~.

The light from Liza's spear has disappeared, Mia is breathing roughly.

Pinch?

But, it's okay.

Toward the snakes that were going to spit fire to Liza and the others, lot, and lots of transparent arrows are descending.

See?

Whenever Tama and the others are in danger, master will always protect us nyan.

I want to eat meat quick~♪

◇Knight◇

"Am I dreaming?"
"Maybe it's support from baron's army."
"Stupid, one could fire at most three magic arrows right? Just how many dozens of people would be needed for that kind of number."

Moreover, the arrows aim toward the zombies that are going to disturb the spearworks of nee-san, and this happens not only once. I think that it's probably a companion of nee-san, but just spare me from misfire okay?

Good grief, I've had enough of absurdity today.

"Please look at that, giants are on the other side of the outer wall."

Heads of giants could be seen on the other side of the city's wall, it looks like they're not destroying the wall, but attacking something on the suburbs. I'm not sure about it, but they're most likely defeating the zombies on the other side.

I've heard that baron Muno is a carefree happy-go-lucky person, but is he employing even the giants? Impossible, story where giants helping humans only happen in heroic tales.

I'll say this again, I've had enough of absurdity already.

6-32. Mortal Combat with the Demon?!

Satou's here. For my work, I had put together a bit of disposable scripts once, but when I got accustomed to it, I could make one in less than 10 seconds.
New recruits were surprised when they see it, but they became able to do it themselves 1 year later. That is if they're still around after a year.

◇

"Where are those girls now?"
"They're right outside the city's wall. Looks like they're surrounded by zombies."
"Really? We have to help them!"
"Ah, we won't make it even if we run. I'll support them with Remote Arrow."

I tell Arisa so, get out to the balcony that faces the city and use the magic. I change into silver mask costume as a precaution if there are any witnesses.

"Uwah, transform? Transform skill?"
"It's just a skill for changing clothes fast."

I wonder if quick clothes-changing skill is rare?
While feeling slightly weirded out with Arisa's bizarre tension, I set up a short cane. I'm fine even without using one, but I'd probably look more like a magician with one.
I fire 3 successive shoots with 50 arrows for each shoot.

For some reason my head is tapped from behind.

"What's wrong Arisa."
"Magic isn't something that you can rapidly fire. When you're in front of people, keep around 10 seconds gap for each shoot."

I see, I've learned new things from Arisa-sensei.

For now, I have to get Liza and the others out of their predicaments. I'll let Liza and the others to finish off the lower 20s-leveled monster, so that they would gain experience, but their safeties come first.
I'm worried about the knight from duke Oyugock near them witnessing it, but they probably wouldn't think that the magic is shot from here, so it's probably fine.

There doesn't seem to be anyone who hang around in the city. Although, it looks like there are thieves around, I mark them for now. I'll leave them alone even if they're in danger.

It seemed that the people who weren't rushing to the castle gate were taking refuges in their houses.

Zombies who get into the city are heading straight to the castle gate.

Looks like the baron and the others have somehow able to move into the castle's stronghold. Even though the fake hero and Ossan seem to be hurt, since they're alive, there's no problem.

◇

"Hey hey, what is that clothes? Cosplay?　If you just had said it, I could had made cooler costumes than that unfashionable one!　Something like cosplay of red comet, or black noble troupe, I want to make you wear many things~."

I'm fine as long as it hides my identity, but I don't want to become Arisa's plaything. She's saying something like, "Mask is romantic after all right.", but I ignore her.

"The forest is strange nano desu."

Pochi pulls the hem of my clothes.

That's right, I had put them off since I was worried with Liza's and the others' safeties, but the giants in the forest were in a pinch.
Fortunately, since giants who are affected with confusion are few, it doesn't seem to have ended up in friendly fire. As expected, It's probably easy for the high-leveled ones to resist the magic.

Now then, while I finish off foes which give Liza and the others hard time with Remote Arrow, I take out the wooden holy sword from the Item Box.

I'd like to try how usable this is against the demon in actual combat. In truth, I wanted to try it against the small fry demon like the Splitter, but since this weapon is too conspicuous with many people watching inside, I gave up.
Even if it doesn't work, I could just use another holy sword.

"You, don't tell me you're going to use that wooden sword?"
"That's right?"

I return Arisa's give-up face with a straight face.
If I say that I do have other trump card, she'd surely scold me with, "Fight with the strongest one from the beginning."
I've used the strongest holy sword when I was fighting Wagahai-kun, however, since the enemy this time is not the type who fights straight, but one who plays dirty, I'm scared to think of the counter if I attack with something that's too strong.

◇

I ask Pochi to watch the urban areas and the castle gate, while I go to the balcony that faces the forest.
Arisa was also going to come along, but I stopped her.

"What?"
"There's someone who has see-through skill in the forest. I don't know how powerful the skill is, so I want to avoid situation where we can be seen."
"Are you fine yourself?"

"Yeah, I've hidden my name so it's fine."
"Wha"

After the incident with Zen I was checking the skill and took the opportunity to investigate the menu further, then I noticed that I was also able to alter my name in the exchange column.
I couldn't do it freely without limit though, just like with Title, I could only change it with names that I owned. In my case they're, [Satou], [Ichirou], [Ichirou Suzuki], [(Namae Nashi)], one among four of them. I've decided to use, [(Namae Nashi)], when I change into silver mask.
<TLN: Namae Nashi means no name, and there's a reason why I don't translate it directly.>

"Your menu is really a cheat huh."
"That so?"

Even though she's said that it's plain, it looks like the evaluation is getting better.
I think that you could do it with magic art anyway, and there are probably skills like, [Conceal Name], or [Alias] out there too.

Reflected on the radar, indicators that denote demons are suddenly rushing out of the forest quickly.

Don't tell me, surprise attack?

I immediately make Remote Arrow to stand by.

"W, what."
"It's the demons, they're jumping out of the forest."

Hearing that word, Arisa readies her cane from the middle of the room.

No, looks like that's not it. The demons are not jumping out, but blown away by someone. As a proof, the split bodies (Splitters) are annihilated the moment they've gotten out of the forest.

The demon's real body who's gotten blown out of the forest is floating in the air while facing the forest.

I can't see it since it's too far, but it's probably floating with magic power. When I look hard at it, some skills become available. Might as well activate them.

>[Distant View Skill Acquired]
>[Bird's Eye Skill Acquired]
>[Seeing at a Distance Skill Acquired]

What's the difference between Distant View and Seeing at a Distance skills? Later when I ask Arisa, it seems that distant view lets you see far away things while they're still looking small, and Seeing at a Distance lets far away things look to be closer. Looks like the former narrows your view, while the latter let you see details in far away things.

"Uh, my magic could had reached it if it was closer."

I guess it's about 2 kilometers away.

"Won't it reach if you you use Over Boost?"
"Nope, nope, it would reach, but if it's that far, the power would be too thinned out."

A little idea hit me, I take out a bolt and a crossbow from the Item Box. About the crossbow, I tried dissembling it once to understand how it worked--since it was boring to reassemble it back just like that--I remodeled it. Liza wasn't able to pull the bowstring since I went too far with the remodeling.

"Wait, if you're using normal arrow, even if it reach it won't deal significant damage you know?"
"Is it like that?"

I cut the bolt in half using the Troll Slayer dagger. I feel that Arisa would scold me if I casually use a holy sword for that, so I use this one instead.

I engrave the same pattern as holy sword on the remaining half of the bolt and pour the blue liquid that I've used to make the wooden holy sword. Since I've stored it in the Storage, it's still fresh.

After I've finished pouring the blue liquid, I put it on the magic bestowing stand and complete the process. It may be the result of me doing it once that I've done this far without even taking 30 seconds.

"You, you're making it as if you have production skill related cheat huh."

I put glue on the bolt and attach a thin piece of metal on it.

Alright, holy bolt is complete.
The cost is about 20% of holy sword. This might be more usable than that.

I put magic power into the Holy Bolt.
Since Arisa has had put 100 MP into the the holy sword just fine, first I'll put around 50 MP.

It's fine.
Continuing on, 100 MP.

The demon seemingly has noticed the light leaking from the window, it turns toward here.
In order to restrain it, I make the standing-by Remote Arrow to encircle it.

"Demons aren't something you can defeat with beginner class magic."
"It's just for restraint."

Oh?

Even though I've said that it's for restraint to Arisa, the demon's health is gradually decreasing from the remote arrows that hit it. Looks like it doesn't have instantaneous recovery like No-Life King. It might be unexpectedly beatable with rapid firing of Remote Arrow.

When I put 200 MP into the Holy Bolt, it begins to shake. It's the same pattern like with Liza's spear. It would probably explode if I put more.

Now then, I wonder how much damage will it incur?

Since the restraining Remote Arrows are encircling the demon like a cocoon, the demon is already doing everything it could just to avoid the

magic arrows.

I've decided on the aim, and shoot the holy bolt.

And then, several hundred meters away after the shooting, the holy bolt causes a small explosion--

"Aah."
"I guess it's impossible for a such hastily-made thing."

From there, it rapidly accelerates and flies.

Drawing blue tracks of light, it sucks up the demon--

"Huh?"

--It flies away beyond the empty sky while leaving several circles that looks like black mist.

It was too anticlimactic of an end, but since the log displayed, [Short Horn Demon is Defeated!], I did have properly defeated it.

I watch the black mist disappear while tapping the golden wooden holy sword that doesn't get its turn.

"Hey, what about the demon? Is it coming here?"

From Arisa's point of view, it only looked like a small explosion.

"I've beat it."

I clown around for a bit, but it doesn't fit my character. Arisa is befuddled. Good, it was really good that I didn't attach, "Tehee."

"Holy weapons really work well against demons huh."

I deceive her with a straight face.

"Wha!? This cheat guy~~ what about my turn~."

Arisa flops down on the carpet exhausted, but I won't say to her that, being a reincarnated person with unique skill that she is, we're the same kind.

The giants are dropping off a person who looks to be the young lady on top of the passage of the city wall. I can't see the magic tool with the see-through skill called Raka-san or something. It probably could either becomes small or transparent.

I'm getting a hunch that this will be bothersome. I lead Arisa and the other away from this place quickly.

6-33. End of Turmoil

Satou's here. There's a saying that, "There is no younger brother who surpasses his older brother.", but a "Younger sister who surpasses her older sister." does exist you know.

◇

Well, now that the demon has been dealt with, let's meet up with Liza and the others.
Lulu and Nana are remaining in the village, so they're probably fine. Both of their HP haven't decreased, and also Nana's MP and Lulu's stamina are at no-problem level.

"Now then, Arisa, Pochi, let's get out of here."
"Yes, nano desu."
"Okay."

What's wrong Arisa, you look awfully tired.

"Are you tired?"
"Yeah, I really am."
"I'll piggyback you nodesu~."

It looks like she's not pleased with the instant-kill of the demon with the holy bolt earlier. I should have not taken Arisa's turn to shine after all.
Since Pochi seems to want to carry Arisa on her back, I leave it to her. When Pochi is running down the the stairs, Arisa shouts, "N, No, I'd rather master to carry me instead~". Looks like she's unexpectedly energetic.
Before I knew it, she had started to call me, "Master" again, instead of "you". Since I don't particularly care, I let her call me whatever she likes, but that Arisa obstinately calls me "Master" only when she's exhausted.

I lift off the silver mask costume that I've forgotten to.
Of course, I also clean-up the wooden holy sword and the remains of holy-

bolt creation without leaving any trace.

>[Evidence Destruction Skill Acquired]

It's a skill reeks of crime, but after I activate it, I perfectly clean-up the traces once again.

I feel like I could do perfect crimes now.

◇

When I'm joining with Pochi and Arisa who are in front of the deserted mansion, I notice that the second daughter of the baron is coming here quickly.

Even though the destruction of evidences takes time, she has just been at the wall, she's really fast. She likely have used magic.

The lady appears from behind the tall hedges.

Demonic.

"You people there, where are hero-sama desuno?"
"Hero-sama had gone with baron-sama to the castle's stronghold."
"It's not that imitation. I'm talking about hero-sama with the golden sword desuwa."

Demonic.

"The hero-sama I know is only that one. I don't think there's anyone else inside the mansion?"
"Karina-dono, this girl seems to have said the truth. Let us go upstairs."
"Where's that voice coming from nodesu? I can't see the jii-chan nodesu."
"Don't tell me, it's an intelligence item?"
<TLN: Jii-chan means gramp, with chan.>

Demonic.

Yes, those are somethings that only exist in 2 dimension (Fiction).

"I understand, young ladies, thank you for the information desuwa."

Demonic breasts (Manyuu)--an existence that has surpassed explosive breasts (Bakunyuu)--Supported by silver locket-shaped ornament, they're hanging, the girl with proportion that looks like a joke runs up the stairs.

"What happen, you've hardened like a stone since awhile ago."

Thanks to Poker Face skill, my glances weren't exposed.
It was too kyonyuu, I had stopped thinking. Even in my wildest dream, I didn't think that there was an existence that surpassed that girl's big sister.

It'd be hard to oppose if such human approaches you.
In a sense, she's more dangerous than the demon.

"I'm sorry, I was surprised to see an Intelligence Item for the first time."
"You're lying. You were probably ● ＲＥＣ-ing that manga-like kyonyuu right?"

Looks like Arisa could see through my lame excuse.
Oh right, rather than that.

"Arisa, can you create figure of my cosplay earlier with your magic?"
"I could do it if it's just an image seen from eyes."

I see, an image huh.

"Then, create the illusion on the window of the mansion's top floor and have him jump around like a flea toward the castle wall, to the urban area."
"Like that, it'd be out of the range of my magic--Is it really necessary?"
"You don't want the kyonyuu beauty from earlier to follow us along right?"

Her appearance is totally in my strike zone, but I feel like the personality is the type I'm not good with.

"Okay. I want to avoid that with all my power."

Violet magic circle appears on Arisa's surrounding. It's Arisa's unique skill, [Over Boost].
I've made sure that there's no one in the vicinity already, even though there's no one in sight on around 2 meters away from the hedge, it may be a bit careless of her to use it outside in the middle of the day.

The illusion of silver mask appears on the mansion's balcony, and casually jumps out from the window. While carrying the golden sword on its shoulder, it's jumping around like pyon-pyon, in straight posture, and then disappears in the city.
The movements were a bit disgusting, but it seemed that the people in the stronghold had properly noticed it, it was a good performance.

Slightly after the illusion goes to the city, the lady shows her face on the balcony.
I've thought that she would come out a bit faster, but the inertia of those breasts are probably really great indoor making her unable to run with all her might. I've hoped that she would witness it when the illusion is out of the see-through skill range, but since there are other witnesses around, there's probably no problem.

Arisa who is exhausted after using Over Boost tries to coerce me to drink her stamina potion mouth-to-mouth, but I pinch her nose and thrust the potion bottle on her mouth.

◇

Now then, before I meet up with Liza, there's one final work that I have to do.

With Remote Arrows, I crush the zombies who are coming out of the passage that the companions of fake hero have used and litter the road with corpses. And of course I also close the entrance near the castle by bending the iron bars near it and tie them to it.

Even though the fake hero's companions are badly hurt, it seems that

there's no one who dies, they're moving toward the territory's border using the side road.

For some reason, knight Eral--It's the guy who's tried to stab Hayuna-san--is also moving behind them. When did that guy escape. His health and stamina are in critical condition too, but this type of guy is usually hard to die, so he probably would live.

Looks like the giants and knight called Zotor are blockading the front gate. Liza and the others are taking care of the zombies inside the city while heading toward the castle gate.
Since the zombies who have invaded the city are consisted of thieves and goblins, they're weak on the whole. I've not fired any support shoot since awhile ago since the opponents are too weak for Liza and the others.

◇

There aren't only soldiers on the top of the castle gate, but also several servant-like people, they are shouting something to the people outside.

Liza and the others are going to arrive soon. The three's levels have been raised. As expected, they would after that many battles. Pochi has become the lowest leveled one among the beastkin girls. Next time, I guess I'll take Pochi to a monster hunting date at midnight.

I lead Arisa and Pochi to climb up the tower beside the castle gate. There's a door that goes toward the castle gate halfway through the tower.
I wonder what is this smell spreading inside the tower. It really stinks.
Pochi put both her hands on her nose as if it's really painful. It's quite a cute gesture.

"Ugeh, what's this kendo's guard-like smell."
"Stinknodesu."

We get out of the dark tower to the top of castle gate. The light is dazzling.

"Oh! she's defeated the last one."

"Yer' amazing, demi-human knight-san."
"Now, people who've bet on the scalekin knight-san for defeating the last one! Receive your share."

Air of delight is dominating the top of the castle gate.
It seems that Liza has just defeated the last zombie. They're about 300 meters away from the castle gate.

"Liza! Tama! Mia!"

I call the three of them while waving my hand.
Liza who noticed me lead the other two to come here while riding the horses. About 10 Oyugock knights are following them from behind.
What's with the subordinates-like movement.

"Are they subordinates of magician-sama?"

The one who ask is wearing soldier-like clothing, but it's actually one of the maid that I've met on the mansion. Since she had rolled up her hair and wears a helm, I did not noticed.
When I affirm it, she says, "I'll make arrangement immediately", and conveys something to an important-looking man. It seems that he's one of the few survivors of the regular soldiers.

With his instruction, one of the door for horse riders is opened, and Liza and the others go inside the castle.

"Satou."

Someone jumps from the unsaddled horse, it's Mia. I catch her and holds her sideway. She's as light as ever.

"Tama."
"Pochi."

Beside us, Pochi and Tama firmly hug each other. Since the two of them were always together, they might had been lonely.

However, Liza is still cautious even after she gets inside the castle. She's

moving her line of sight vigilantly.

"Thank you for your hard work too Liza, there's no enemy inside the caslte, it's alright."

After I assert so, she finally removes her vigilance, and dismounts.
However, her tension is still high. She's probably tense since this is inside the baron's castle.

"You don't have to worry, baron-sama and his peers are open-hearted good people. Pochi was loved too."
"I've received baked sweets nodesu~."

Pochi takes out baked sweets from her pocket and shares it to Tama and Mia. Come to think of it, she was fed on something when she was sitting on the daughter's lap.

"Master, it is most reassuring that you're safe."
"Un, I'm glad that Liza is safe too."

Since there's a small wound on Liza's arm, I heal it with the magic that I've just learned today. Fumu, it uses 10 MP for such small wound huh, looks like potions are more efficient.

Liza is apologizing for leaving her position and coming to the city that has resulted in exposing Tama and Mia to dangers.
It seemed that her action was because she was anxious that I would be imprisoned by the noble. Looks like she's worried about me, with different reason than Arisa.

I'm thankful for the worry, but tonight, I will tell Liza that it's just an imaginary fear.

6-34. End of Turmoil (2)

Satou's here. In my childhood, the word "fiancee" was present in many stories. It has become obsolete before I know it, but I've realized that it's not actually that fun when it befalls me, Satou.

◇

"You're Nee-san's master huh?"
"It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Satou, a merchant."

The young knight with three scars on his face talked to me. He's the captain of the 17th knight squadron of the dukedom that have followed Liza. Even though they're knight of the dukedom, the captain doesn't hide his social status, the vice-captain introduces themselves. Both of them are commoners. Maybe because of that, they feel more like mercenaries than knights. I've thought that a knight would be a ranked noble, but it doesn't appear to be so.

The vice-captain beside him is wearing helmet, so his face can't be seen, but his tribe is the rare panther-headed clan. Of course, I'm not going to deliberately touch upon it.

"Hoo, she wasn't the guard of a noble but a merchant huh. At any rate, you've hired someone really capable, she can even use magic blade. You're probably a heir to a very large merchant family right."
"No, far from being large, I'm a merchant who doesn't even have a store on his own. This time we've just had chance to meet with baron-sama."
"Sorry, the captain is the type who speaks first before thinking."

The vice-captain covered the last part of the captain's talk, but I heard it. The vice-captain covered for the captain, but I think it wasn't something to hide at all.

While we were chatting around, the maid earlier came back and guided us

toward the stronghold.

◇

"Aah!　How dare you deceive me back then!"

When we were dismounting the horses inside the stronghold, a high-pitched voice resounded. It's the second daughter of the baron (Karina) from earlier.

"She comes out, that oppai lady."
"That is enemy."

Arisa and Mia spoke abusively in low voice. Since there's something like lese majeste, do speak in quietly okay?

Swoosh, along with the sound of wind tearing the empty air, the lady's fist has penetrated through the place where my face has just been.
Huh～?　Suddenly battling huh. Is there any reason for me to get twisted in like this?

I try to hear her reason while avoiding.

"Why"

I avoid a jab.

"Am I"

I turn over her hook.

"Being attacked?"

I handled the barrage of attacks from the lady who moved as if she was a fighting game character.
I couldn't help but always got my awareness robbed by the shaking mountains that shook whenever she moved, but I tried to look desperate in

avoiding her as much as possible. However, isn't it painful when those things move that much?

I caught a sight of Liza and Pochi who are going to jump on her. Looks like the other three had controlled themselves from jumping in. I wave my hand when my eyes meet theirs.

"What's with that composure desuno."

After a slight lag, she tries to sweep my leg and I jump to avoid it.
Oops, we were in the middle of battle.

"Impudent desuwa."
"I'm just good at avoiding."

Come to think of it, since I've only been looking at her breasts, I don't realize it before, she's not wearing dress but some kind of horse-riding pants. Her hair has a lot of braids too, if it's only by look, she's like an elegant young lady from horse-riding club who's enjoying her holiday.

"Mou, how capricious! Fight fairly if you're a hero."
"The hero-sama is over there. He's standing next to Soruna-sama right?"

I talk while avoiding her attacks, this could make me bite my tongue.
Her older sister, lady Soruna is coming here together with the fake hero.
Rather than looking surprised with your hands on your mouth, I'd like you to stop this wild horse instead.

"It's not that! You were the one who annihilated the demon right!"

That was dangerous, if I didn't have poker face skill, it would have appeared on my face.
Even if she had witnessed the demon's destruction, the distance between us was several kilometers, even though the magic organism (Raka) had see-through skill, I couldn't believe that he could see me.
However, based on their conversation with Arisa earlier, it might have way to judge truth from lie. I have to be careful as to not have my wit overtaken.

"I remember that it's said that no normal human could defeat a high-

ranking demon though?"
"That's right desuwa, that's why you're hero-sama. If that's not true, then say it."

I confirm the title on my status. Yup, I've taken off the title of hero. Of course, the title column on the exchange menu is alright too. Right now, I'm not a hero.

"I am not."

After receiving my answer, the tiara on lady Karina's forehead blinks. So the silver ornaments she's wearing like that tiara are the true form of the magic organism (Raka) huh. They look like reinforced arms.

"Raka-san?"
"Truth."
"...No way."

The lady is shocked after hearing the voice from the tiara.

"There is no mistake Karina-dono, he is not the hero."
"Then, just where has that true hero with golden sword gone to!"

Since she's throwing a tantrum, I'm moving away.
Looks like she's not so well educated. Considering it's that baron, she probably has been brought up indulgently.

"Karina, the silver masked person with golden sword appeared from the mansion's top floor and disappeared in the direction of the city you know?"
"Is that true, onee-sama?"
"It's true Karina-sama, I've seen it too."
"I didn't ask you."

She frankly believes the words of her older sister, lady Soruna. She's cold against the fake hero. Live strong.
It doesn't seem like lady Karina is going to go after it to the city.
She apologizes for attacking me by mistake, even though it's partly because the older sister has reprimanded her. Her gesture is so ladylike to the point that I'm thinking if the battle-junkie manner earlier is an illusion.

Since I've enjoyed the wonderful shaking in close proximity, and the peanut gallery around us should have been too, I accept the apology without complaining.

◇

We're being guided to the audience hall inside the stronghold by lady Soruna. Somehow, lady Karina who has sulky looks on her face is also following us. Of course, the duke's knight captain also follows.
It's fine that they do but--

"Even sir Zotol wasn't able to defend half of my attack, I couldn't believe that he could even avoid my surprise attack."
"However, he's not a hero, no mistake 'bout it."
"But, those moves didn't look like a beginner."
"Those moves were certainly amazing. I'd like to be taught at least once."
"Someone like you won't even last a match. Stay out of it."
"Karina!"
"But, Soruna ane-sama."

Not only was the the lady complaining by while muttering, even the hero asked me to teach him. I'll talk to the fake hero, so the lady won't bother me.

"I'm only good at avoiding. By the way hero-sama, what happen to that face?"
"Ha ha, please stop calling me hero. I was just set up and used by the demon to be one, I wasn't up to the caliber. The bruise on my face is the proof. There were people hired by the consul, no the demon, mixed in with the people who got inside the castle gate. I was hit when I protected baron-sama."
"I see, it's a honorable injury is it."
"That's right, the reason why I wanted to be a hero was to protect someone. The demon made use of that feeling, but my desire to protect hadn't changed."

Fake hero, what the heck are you talking about?

"I'm going to be the knight of Soruna-sama."
"Ufufufu, that's wonderful desuwa. Since the family's peerage will be inherited by my little brother, I could marry anytime you know?"
"Soruna-sama, I will be your knight without fail!"

Since the two have begun to get excited without minding the place, we leave them alone. A maid steps forward as a substitute for the guide.

◇

In the audience hall, there are a woman of around thirty lying on a simple bed and also baron-san, hayuna-san and her family. The woman is Nina Rottol, a viscount. Her cheeks have been drained, but the light of will on her eyes are strong. From the story before, she should have been locked in the gaol for more than a year, she's probably quite a resilient person at heart.
I don't know the reason why the demon didn't kill her, but it was probably nothing decent.

"I'm sorry for this look. I'm the new consul, Nina."

Her voice is powerful and husky.
The duke knight captain and me return the greeting.

"It looked like you were able to see through the true form of the demon."
"Yes, I had got various informations from my fellow merchants, and then I confirmed it with fathoming crystal."

Today, the deception skill is having its field day too.
Raka which can see-through lies is with Karina who's having reunion with the baron, so it's not paying attention here.

"Furthermore, on top of eradicating that demon, you've also exterminated the monsters which have gotten inside the city right."
"It was my companions who did that. Moreover, according to lady Karina's story, the demon's real body was annihilated by a mysterious silver mask."
"Companion? Ah, achievements of your slaves belong to your achievements

you know."

What kind of reasoning is that.
In addition, captain-san also praises Liza and the others.

"Nina-dono, his companions also did another deeds. They protected the people who were running away from flocks of demon on the highway outside the city, and no one was hurt. We were also assisting them, but without their leadership, we would have not been able to prevent some deaths."

Since that's the first time I've heard it, I listen to his story carefully.

The three have did wonderfully.

Even baron-san who starts to listen to the story midway lets out exaggerated surprise. It feels like listening to a bard rather than a knight captain.
After the captain has finished telling the success of Liza and the others, Nina-san is whispering something to baron-san. Baron is nodding up and down. Somehow, Nina-san looks to be the superior here.

"Magician Satou-dono, do you have someone whom you serve?"
"No, there is none."

I inadvertently answered frankly, but I had a bad feeling from this flow.

"Then, would you like to serve this territory's baron? You'd be only given honorary knight title at first, but there's no one like that among generation of Muno-sama's vassal. He's surely a baron for now, but he's a respectable lord. It has been determined that he would be promoted to be an earl before he gets a grandchild. Depending on your work, you could advance your rank as you please you know?"
"I'm really sorry but--"

Of course, I refuse Nina-san's offer. My purpose is to go on a sightseeing, not becoming a noble and succeed in life. Afterwards, Nina-san continues to aggressively solicit me for about half an hour.

While evading her, the story about the annihilation of baron's army and the clean-up of the demon outside the city by the giants get mixed in.

"Apparently, you really helped this baron's territory which had been in the brink of ruin to survive. It might be better if you marry with baron-sama's daughter and join the family."
"You're overestimating me."

The second daughter over there comes out with an explosive statement.

"Then it's fine for him to be my fiancee. Then his achievements would become baron's family achievements right?"

This woman! She absolutely spoke that only to harass me.

"How about it? Are you going to be the fiancee of a beauty or a honorary knight, you could also take both you know?"
"Umu, it might be fine to leave Karina to Satou-dono."

Even baron-san is agreeing while nodding. I have a feeling that if I'm to marry lady Karina, he thinks that Pochi and Tama would follow along too.
I like her looks, but judging from her action and speech, I don't think that we'd lead a satisfactory life.

"N, no, something like fiancee."
"No."

After hearing the problematic remark of lady Karina, Arisa and Mia who had been grinning and looking as if spectators intruded.
Liza has been spreading intimidating aura on her surrounding behind me since awhile ago.
I don't know since when, but Pochi and Tama are being fed by the maids with baked sweets on the corner of the room.

In the end I lose to their forceful push, and take the route of becoming a honorary knight. I will have no duty but in return, I won't get salary or pension.
Even though I would become a noble, even if it's of the lowest rank, Arisa doesn't assist me as if agreeing with it. Looks like her stance is that of 'as

long as he doesn't become lady Karina's fiancee'.

When Liza, Pochi and the others are offered to become the baron's vassal for their achievements, we refuse it but in exchange we ask for the like of Totona and the others and also serfs who have ran away to be promoted to become commoners. We also get the permission for the development of the reclaimed lands to be handed to their villages. Of course, it was Arisa who was negotiating.

In the end, we had to settle various affairs, and we could only leave the baron's territory after two weeks.

Intermission: Lulu

I had always been an unwanted child since I was young.

My mother worked as a maid in the castle, so since childhood, I was taken care by my aunt who lived in the castle town. I don't have a father. When I was younger, I heard something about my father, but it was left aside.

"You're really ugly. Go draw water so I don't have to see that face."

It seemed that my aunt hated my face, I was often told to do works outside the house.
My aunt and her husband had two boys and one girl of the same age as me. They're Jido, Bado and Kuku.

Jido disturbed me by kicking me when I was just about to pull the water from the well.
Bado tripped my feet when I was carrying the bucket.

I was usually cautious toward them, but I didn't see their figures today, it was a failure.
Since the water splashed onto soil, I had become full of mud.

"Yay, muddy Lulu."
"Hehen, mud make-up looks better than your normal face y'know~"

I wept as I was more vexed that I couldn't deny them more than getting myself muddied. It was a fact that people were gentler to me when I was covered with mud and my face couldn't be seen than when I was just simply soaked.

When I was washing my body near the well, Kuku came. She was with her usual sarcastic friends.

"Ara? What a waste of your special make-up."
"Right right, wouldn't it better if she wear mask anyway?"
"That's good! Kuku, you're a genius!"

The girls weren't using violence like Jido and Bado, but their words hurt me all the same. At a time like this, I wonder how would Arisa retaliate? If it was Tama-chan, she would likely throw mud balls toward those girls for their own make-up.

It was generally like these during my childhood.

◇

When I was 9 years old, my mother took me to the castle together with her. I was to be the princess's playmate. It seemed that the fourth queen's daughter was quite a sickly person. Moreover, she was really hard to please, noble daughters couldn't keep her company for more than three days, so they turned to me.

Normally, for a commoner like me to meet a princess, I would have to take etiquette lesson for about a year first, but it seemed they gave up in 2-3 days, so the lesson was abbreviated.

"It's Lili's daughter this time? Mou, I've said many times that I don't need playmates, if they insist, then bring me a scholar or a bureaucrat instead."

What I heard from the other side of the door was a child voice with tired and proud adult words that didn't suit it. I'm not welcomed here either after all.
The princess that I met for the first time was a very beautiful girl with mysterious violet hair and pupils. Furthermore, her eyes were really calm like an adult.
Pushed by my mother, I awkwardly introduced myself, the princess glanced at me and then briskly stepped toward me and push up my bang. I always covered my ugly face with a bang so it wouldn't be seen.
I prepared myself for the abuse that the princess would throw at me. But the abuse was different from what I expected.

"Cih, this riajuu face, winners have it all since they're born."
"Arisa-sama, even though this girl can't be said to have superior look, she's

a good girl that's calm at her age. Please don't hate her."

Riajuu face? I've never heard those words.
Arisa-sama leaned her neck to the side after hearing my mother's word and murmured, "Poor look?" That's the kindness of a mother. She couldn't really say that her own daughter was ugly.

"What are you saying? Lili. If you tell me that this bishoujo face is poor, that'd mean this country doesn't have any beauties you know?"

At this time, I had thought that Arisa's words were an indirect sarcasms, but she told me later that she was serious.
Thus, I became the playmate of the princess.

◇

The princess that I served was a slightly strange person.
She ordered the servants to cultivate a field on the castle's garden, and she went inside the library and treasure vault in the castle to read many difficult books. Even though she made her unusual clothes herself, she couldn't do embroidery or knitting, she had many imbalances like that. Moreover, she was also not good with social dancing and poem reciting.

"Did you look at the new playmate of the taboo princess?"
"I saw I saw, what's with that ugly girl."
"Hey, they'll scold you if you say that."

I heard such backbiting from the the maid's room. It seemed that taboo princess was about Arisa. Looked like, those violet hair and pupils were considered to be bad omen.
I didn't tell about it to anyone, but the women were gone in the next day. The princess said, "Fufun, it's impossible for malicious gossip to skip my sharp ears." It seemed there was a magic tool to hear far sounds, it was called voice pipe.

At the following day, princess Arisa told me a children story called "The Ugly Duckling".

Princess Arisa had told me many stories, but I liked this story the most
I wasn't as naive as to think that I would become like the swan in reality,
but I thought I was allowed to dream a little.

◇

Hectic days continued after that.
What surprised me most was the fact that I was the older sister of princess Arisa from different mother. It seemed she heard it with that tool called voice pipe from the other maids' talks. It should had been a secret, but princess Arisa already knew about it.

"With this, there are 12 siblings. There are probably more if I look in the castle town. I'd hate a country without entertainment. That's right Lulu."
"Yes, what is it Arisa-sama."
"I'm banning the 'Sama'."
"Yes?"
"Like, I, said, when it's only the two of us, don't use it. Since we're sister, I'm banning the honorific."

The face of pri--no, Arisa which had turned away looked red.
At this day, we became sisters, no, the best of friends.

◇

Arisa wanted to do agricultural reform to make this country prosperous. However, I was worried. The minister's son was supporting Arisa's agricultural reform, but from the gossip of the maids, it looked like he wasn't a decent human being.

"It's fine, men aren't trustworthy in the first place, but that kind profit-seeking type is surprisingly usable. Above all, this country only sees women as tools for giving birth. If I don't have a puppet like that then I wouldn't be able to meddle in the politics."

However, after this day, the cogwheels of our plan began to go out of order little by little.

The mountain died, monsters came out of the fertilizers, and the fields' harvests dropped sharply.
But, I personally was more worried about Arisa than the country. Even though she was called, "The Wise Salvation Princess" just the other day, now as if flipping hand, they called her, "Country Destroying Witch", or "Mad Princess".
Then the king finally confined her inside one of the spire in the castle. It seemed that our country had been occupied by another country, although I didn't know the detail since I was only looking after Arisa while being confined with her.

The kings and his companions were executed, and we became slaves.

Arisa was looking like a doll with her lifeless eye and lethargic condition. She's not like the usual stout-hearted Arisa, but she's still a 10 years old girl. It is not unreasonable.

The strength in Arisa eyes came back after a year, when we were moved to the royal villa from the prison, it came back a bit. In the evening with full moon, the royal capital sank into flame. The two of us ran away to the mountain. We were surviving while being frightened by the wolves sounds, endured starvations by eating nuts, and drank water collected with leaves. When we ran out of strength on the highway among the mountains, we got caught by a passing slave trader. If we had not got caught at that time, we would probably die of starvation or fall victim to the wolves' fangs.

◇

"Guhehehehe～."

I felt cold shivers on my spine when I heard creepy voices from Arisa.
Aah! It seemed that the stout Arisa had finally reached her limit.

Even though I'm clumsy and good-for-nothing, an older sister is still an

older sister.
I don't know what kind of person our master would be like, but I would protect Arisa until the end.

Even though I had such grim determination--

That Arisa, she was just laughing after finding her favorite type of young man! Mou, that Arisa, mou!

It was several days later that the young man became our master.

My first impression on that person is, "He looks like me."
He's not ugly like me, but his features are similar. His lines are slender, his colors are also not white, but black like me.
But, I don't think that he's as pretty as Arisa make him up to be. I wonder what does Arisa like from him?

◇

"It's quite tough."
"What is?"

I was surprised when I heard Arisa's story. That Arisa! She was crawling inside master's bed in nude herself to get his favor. She's too bold!

But, master didn't seem to touch Arisa. Master should be only 2-3 years apart from Arisa, it was strange that he didn't lay his hands on her when someone as beautiful as Arisa approached.

I wonder if master likes men?

◇

Today, I talked a lot about Arisa with master.
I noticed that I was talking too much in the middle, but I couldn't restrain

myself as I didn't feel tense like I would with other men.
But, master listened me to the end without showing unpleasant face even once.

Furthermore!
Furthermore desu!

He didn't look disgusted from seeing my face.
It might be the first time this happened beside with Arisa.

It might only be my misunderstanding, but I felt like he was looking at me gently full of affection. Even if it was misunderstanding, it is fine.

Since the only one who could cook was Liza, I offered myself to help her. I also had things I could do. I would work hard to become something that was needed, not only as a freebie from Arisa.
<TLN: Like she's an extra Satou gets from buying Arisa.>

Ehehehe~.
I got master to praise me, "Tea made by Lulu is delicious."
This might possibly the first time I had been praised by a person.

◇

"Yes, listen to the sound well."

Impossible. It's impossible, master!
Y, you can't whisper so close to my ears.

Aah!　I feel too happy, I would likely get a nosebleed. As a girl, I cannot live if that situation happen. I'll endure with spirit.

But, it was not a whisper of affection. I earnestly asked the secret of the really delicious steak that master had made yesterday.

But it was not the time to listen to the oil at all when I was being embraced from behind with our hands stuck together holding the frying pan.

Even so, I still managed to grill one somehow.
When I sampled the meat, even though it was absolutely no match against the one that master grilled, it was many times tastier than the one I made yesterday!

As a proof that I was not mistaken, the plate became empty in a blink of an eye.

◇

It was exposed to Arisa.
I wonder how did she knew that I was attracted to master. It's mysterious.

But, master is very popular.
Not only to Arisa, but to Pochi-chan and the others too.

Furthermore, this time, even the the elf princess!

"I, I will also work hard to gain your favor."
"Yes, yes, you're cute Lulu. However let's wait the favor until you refine yourself as a woman in 5 years okay."

Cute he said!
Just now, he said that I was cute right?!

Ah, I can die of happiness.
To think that the day I got called that so naturally would come, it was such an absurd thought even in a dream or a delusion.

Even though the rivals increased, we had got to share bed together, we even did "A~n" like lovers, it was full of happiness.

Becoming master's wife or mistress are too unrealistic of a dream, but if some kind of mistakes happen, I would bear master's baby.

When I talk about it to Arisa--

"It's alright Lulu! When I become the legal wife, I will absolutely make Lulu the second!"

Arisa is very reliable.
But, I can't keep relying on Arisa.

I can't match with my face no matter what, but I work hard every day to make my figure suit master's liking. I'm still doing [Bust-up Practice] that Arisa and Mia have given up in three days.

And also my cooking! I will improve my cooking to be equal for standing next to master.

And then, he would say "Lulu, you're cute." once again!
It's an audacious ambition, but I will absolutely make it comes true.

Intermission: Muno's Past

This is a saloon on the corner of the royal palace. It's dim even in midday due to the numerous thick curtains covering the light from outside, magic tools illuminate from below. Curtains are hanging from the roof and decorative plants are set to divide sofa sets as if to obstruct the views.

For that reason, the identity of the people in this place aren't known--That's how it is.

Furthermore, the gaps between each sofas are large, magic tools for changing voices are used and they talk in whisper to the point that the other person sitting on the next seat can barely hear it.

This is the place where gossips from all over Shiga kingdom are gathered.

It's an important place for the nobles to not only talk about scandals, but also to exchange informations revolving national defense that have been transmitted using magic.

◇

"Have you heard about it?"

One gentlemen sits down while greeting someone in secret.
Publicly, the person shouldn't be known, but everyone knows who's the one who can sit on that sofa set. They only pretend to not know.

"Is it about marquis Muno?"
"Oh, you're quick."
"Right now, everyone is talking about that story. Like how undeads are attacking Muno city."
"Half a day after the initial report from the royal palace emergency room, there's no more additional information, it's worrying."
"I can't imagine the elites of the marquis fall to something like undeads.

They've probably been repulsed already, but it'd be a good opportunity to get the right of the marquis' territory depending on the damage."
"Well, everyone, please calm down. Why don't we let him tell us the latest information."

The high class people who have been talking turn toward an old man with good build.
Everyone are seemingly hungry of new informations, the buzz suddenly stops at once.

"Territory of marquis Muno has been defeated by the undeads army."

From that words, the bustling is revived from the silent.

"That can't be."
"They should have golem corps and even magician corps there."
"Moreover, they should had just bought a lot of tigerkin slaves from the weaselkin and made large battalions."
"They should have been one of the strongest five forces in this country."
"What actually happened?"

Their surprises are natural. Marquis Muno holds a very vast territory that produces many gold, silver, and even mithril and magic ores from their leading mines. Backed by that assets and various luxuries that even the king lack, the marquis had amassed armed forces that could even fight against the king's armies.

"We have to wait for more reports to understand what actually happens, we've only received the report that 『The marquis capital has fallen』 from the the birdkin of duke Oyugock's intelligence unit."

Silence dominates the room, but then the oldest gentleman who holds a cane starts to talk.

"I'm sorry but I have to go see my physician soon. Excuse me for leaving."
"Is that so, it's also the time for me to play with my gradnchildren."
"My chronic pain is aching..."

The older gentlemen are leaving their seats one by one, the only ones who

remain in that place is the young gentleman who has brought the news and a middle-aged gentleman. Of course, the two understand that the words of the people who are leaving are just mere excuses.

"Everyone is shrewd for profit huh."
"The kingdom army is most likely going to depart for the extermination of the undeads. Since there are many way to profit from it if the campaign is large-scale, it can't be helped."
"Is it fine for you?"
"Yes, I've already arranged something in the house."
"As expected of the right-hand man of the majesty."
"Your excellency, prying for identity here is"
"Ah right, sorry. I'd like to get my hand on the list of nobles with no legitimate child from you, no, from a certain bureaucrat-dono, would he be willing to help?"
"That's wonderful. Other people's happiness are my happiness. I'd be glad to be the deliveryman."

And then, two months after he brought the informations, the largest gathering of kingdom army ever recorded in history departed to marquis Muno's territory.

◇

"Then, all relatives of marquis Muno have died of unnatural causes?"
"It doesn't end only in that. Earl Bobi that had married with the marquis' little sister and all their children, every one of them die from a drowning accident."
"Is that true? I've also heard that misfortunes have befallen earl Muzuki?"

After the triumphal return of the kingdom army who has gone on campaign to the marquis Muno's territory, the whole family of marquis Muno have died unnaturally, no one remains from either direct or collateral family. Thereupon, for the sake of succeeding the marquis, it seems that the nobles have sent out the one who have married into the marquis family, but they all die of accidents or mysterious illness, such reports are coming in succession to the royal capital.

Such stories also appears many times among their talks.

"If it's like this, the one who will inherit the territory might be marquis Ashinen or earl Fudai who don't have territory of their own."
"No, the territory of marquis Muno is too wide. It's possible to divide it into 4 or 5 territories."
"Oh dear, right about this time, there should be a lot of nobles who are raising money for the bribes."
"No wonder there are a lot of applicant for loan this month."

And then, half a year after this day, blood relations of marquis Muno up until the seventh degree of kinship have all died out. The rumor among the people is that it's the curse of the undead king.

◇

"Fuh, after marquis Ashinen, even earl Fudai died of unnatural death huh."
"Putting aside earl Fudai who has died of drowning in his house's pond, isn't the marquis Ashinen who has been killed by a spear in the downtown area not an unnatural death?"
"However, the guards who were with him didn't even notice when he was kidnapped in an instant, wasn't he fallen to the hand of the undead king?"
"Oy oy, nobles, of all people, shouldn't believe the irresponsible rumor of the street people."
"Well, even if we put aside the rumor, with this, there have been five influential nobles who would have succeeded Muno's family that dies of unnatural death consecutively."
"How many candidates remain now?"
"There is none. Every one of them has withdrawn."

Everyone, including the one who asked that question, already knew. The atmosphere is full of sarcastic smiles of people with obstructed faces.

"Even though they had bribed, no, spent entertainment expense to the brink of bankruptcy, they withdrew because they got cold feet from the rumor huh."
"No, two people among the five were active labyrinth explorers during their

youth. It might be wise for them to withdraw."

Afterwards, a lot of lower honorary nobles full of ambition instigated by their guardian for their own profit also appeared, but the ones who bore the full brunt weren't only the lower nobles, even the guardian nobles died of unnatural death, so the candidates completely dried out.

And then, as the reward for the subjugation of the undead city, the mines of marquis Muno are given to the adjacent lords, starting with duke Oyugock. Since there are a lot of dissatisfied voices from the knights who have participated in the battle, it's decided that the for the next 10 years, from the yields produced by mines that the feudal lords have obtained, 20% of it are to be given to the king, and the remaining half are to be shared among the knights.

Due to this, the value of marquis Muno's territory has fallen sharply.
With the profit gone and only risk remain, years where Muno's territory is without a feudal lord keeps piling.

◇

"Everyone, do you know that the feudal lord for the undead city has been decided?"
"Oy oy, you, don't call it undead city."
"That's right, there should be around 20-30 thousands people who live there."
"Oh, I apologize."

The young noble receives a cup of wine from a maid and wets his mouth with it.

"So it should be either the fifth prince or the honorary Earl Toldora, which one is it?"
"Since it'd be bad if a member of royal family death, it would be honorary earl Toldora right?"

The young noble who has started the matter only listens to the talks of the

nobles around amusingly without opening his mouth.
Seemingly impatient, a middle-aged noble representing other nobles urges him to continue the story. However, the name that the young noble lets out is unexpected by anyone.

"Do everyone know baronet Donan?"
"Now then, that's an unfamiliar name."
"No, wait, I've heard it somewhere."
"Wasn't he from the branch family of duke Oyugock."
"Ah, that good-natured small man huh. He gave a self-compiled hero's book for the celebration of our seven year olds daughter's birthday."
"Ah, that man who's famous for liking hero huh."
"However, I don't remember him being a brave person who would risk his life by becoming a feudal lord like that?"

Yes, from what they remember, the incompetent man is fit to be called 'forgettable'. He didn't look like a man who had ambition to raise himself at all.

He was a straight harmless man--that's the common view among them.

"That would mean that he was likely recommended by duke Oyugock."
"But, the guardian nobles were dying too. Do you think that cautious duke Oyugock would do such thing?"
"That's right, since the mines have been distributed to the neighboring lords, marquis Muno's territory is only large without any specialized industry from its people, it has been reduced to poverty. There shouldn't be any profit for the excellency duke to be involved now."

It can't be helped that they're puzzled. Excluding the area directly under the king, the duke holds the largest territory. And it's not just vast, it's also the leading territory that produces things like rice, salt, silk and glasswork. Moreover, he even got himself the mines from marquis Muno territory and the right to deal with the set mines that the dwarves have occupied. No one can think why he would want a territory that's only wide now.

"Actually, about that baronet Donan, he has been living in the city of the marquis Muno territory for the past five years."
"What? Weren't even honorary nobles and lower nobles killed in Muno

city?"
"That's right, the only nobles in Muno city now is the associate baron and his family."
"He's bringing his family to such place huh."
"It looks like they're people ignorant of the world."
"Fumu, rather than incompetent, his insensitivity can't be saved."
"Since his wife is a commoner, their noble blood is thin, that might be the reason."

Thus, in the following year, baronet Donan succeeds the Muno title, and becomes a baron inaugurated as the feudal lord.

◇

Let's change the place, to the baron main building inside the castle. 10 years after the inauguration as the baron, it's the mansion that has finally been completed with the assistance of duke Oyugock.

"Then, the marriage for the princess is indeed...
"Yeah, since the ceremony was postponed for many times, I had anticipated it, but a messenger with official refusal notice had come."
"Good grief, how deplorable. If they wanted to refuse, then the fiance-dono should had come himself."

The baron soothes the consul Jii who gets mad for his sake. He lost his anger after the surprising outlet of the anger earlier.

"It can't be helped, Soruna doesn't look to be interested anyway, and even their ages are 10 years apart."
"However, if this keeps up, her marriageable age would pass."

The words is unreserved since they've been together for many years, the baron smiles wryly.

"I don't mind even if it's a person from the street if Soruna has chosen."
"We can't let that happen. As he would inherit this territory, he should not be lower than vassals that have served master for generations. Moreover,

it's also important to marry the neighboring lords. You can't be negligent in this matter."

Even while nodding to Jii's words, the baron has halfway given up about the engagements of his daughters. Until the time when he was inaugurated as the feudal lord, there were more than 100 nobles who died while aiming to become this territory's lord. Furthermore, it didn't only befall to the person himself, sometimes even the parents until the grandchildren terribly fell victims.

Even if they are escaping from their own difficulty, there is no guarantee that they would not fall into calamity if they marry the daughter of the cursed territory's lord. There are many nobles who think so.

Even the partner who had declined this time had only become the fiancee because he was promised to become the lord at the beginning. In fact, lady Karina is going to be an adult next year, but she still doesn't have a fiancee even now.

It's five years later that lady Soruna meet her new fiancee, and a year before the worst calamity visit baron Muno's territory.

Intermission: Muno Castle's Servant

"Then there is no objection, we will change to this clothes that Arisa-dono has proposed starting this spring."

After the head maid said so, the 20 maids inside the room cheered in joy at once.
But, that can't be helped I think. It's a brilliantly cute clothes that can't be compared to the dark grey plain work clothes that we have worn until now.

"Umm, head maid."

When I look at the person who's asking, not only me, everyone's faces stiffen.
It's Meeda who's always saying unneeded things at bad times.

"Is there a budget to arrange such expensive looking clothes for everyone's share? If there's an extra budget, then I'd be happier with bonus."

I'd like money too, but there's no way that bonus would come out.
After the head maid glares at Meeda with eyes like ices, she replies seriously.

"There is no extra budget."

What'd you say?!

"Chevalier Satou-sama will bear the expense for the production of one set of maid uniforms including the matching aprons for everyone."

Uhya, if it's for the shares of 20 people, I wonder how many gold coins it'd be?
I've had a guess after seeing Pochi-chan and the other's hairs and equipments, but he's really rich huh. What does he see in this kind of poor noble's place that he'd serve under it?

I guess he's really aiming for Karina-sama's knockers?

Get destroyed you big-breasts lovers.

◇

"What's today's dinner I wonder~."
"Haa, I'm hungry~."

My coworker, Talna, and me enter the dining room. Since the work in the morning got dragged on, our lunches were also delayed.
Usually our meals consist of only boiled potatoes and salted soup, but it can't be helped that we're looking forward to it for the past week.
Pochi-chan and the others said, "Prey nano desu~.", and went on to hunt birds and other beasts. They put professional hunters to shame, but are all demi-humans this amazing?

"Oh, Talna, Erina. You've come at just the right time."

The master of the kitchen, Gelt-obasan, called us.
Oh?!　If she's here that would mean that!

"Don't tell me, chevalier-sama is using the kitchen?"
"That's right, looks like he's doing trial and error to make a dish called Karaage or something."

Yes!
Talna's and my eyes meet, savoring in joy.
It's unbearable if we get driven out of the dining room if we make noise here.

"Hey hey, Gelt-san."
"I know, wait a bit more."

So even Gelt-san is also looking forward to it.
When the door opens, chevalier-sama's slave girl is carrying a plate with small dark brown lumps on it. What's this girl's name again? Was it Lili. Her face is a shame, but she's a good girl with no strange behavior.

"Thanks to Gelt-san's advice, it has come out well. Umm, although there are some from chevalier's trial mixed in, if you'd like."
"Yeah, those starving maids over there will take care of it, no problem."
"Yup, yup, if it's chevalier-sama's dish, I'd eat it no matter how much~"
"Yep, yep, I'm envious with you girls who could eat it anytime."

I stab the karaage with a fork and carry it in front of my mouth. It's a bit bold of me since it's the first time I've seen this kind of dish, but if it's chevalier's dish, it must be delicious without doubt.
I put it in my mouth and bite it. Hot. But, it's delicious. It's different than grilled or steamed meat. What's this I wonder, I think the inside is chicken meat, but I'm not sure what's the crispy thing outside. But, it's delicious.

When I'm thinking of eating one more and put the fork on the plate, there's already nothing remaining.

"Erina, you sure can eat well."
"Mou, Erina, I want to eat a bit more too."

Oops, I thought of eating just one more, but I had already finished half of the plate myself.
Lili is giggling. That laughter must be because she's thinking that my way of eating is similar to another person. I've thought so.

◇

"That's why the shortcut to increase the earning is by gathering population!"
"Even if you say that, what should we do about food supply."
"We're back to our talk earlier for that. Let's readjust the land on this uselessly wide city, and put farms inside it like Seryuu city. According to master's survey, it should be possible to make fields on 70% of the city."

I'm putting tea and tea-cake sweets on a place that doesn't disturb lady Arisa and consul Nina who are engaging in heated discussion.
Still, this girl really doesn't look like a 10 years old.
To talk politics in equal term with Nina-sama, she's surely a genius. Even

Nina-sama and Baron-sama call her with [Dono] honorific even though she's chevalier's slave. On top of that, it seems that the prototype for the new maid uniform is made by her, amazing person is amazing in anything. God is unfair.

"How long does that man intend to sleep? Arisa-dono, aren't you working your master too much?"
"No way, we sleep together even today."

Dangerous, I almost made a sound when I put down the cup.
What? That person is sleeping together with this child. To think that his range isn't limited to the beautiful blond wife with big breasts, but also to this small girl. That's unexpected.

◇

"Erina, you're backing away. Talna, don't hold back."

Today, we're training together with new recruits inside the city. Talna and me were originally soldiers, but they were searching for people who could stand up against thieves from the baron's army, so we changed jobs to become maid and guards for the ladies.
I wonder if it's because of that that I don't really feel sad to hear that baron army is almost annihilated. If I didn't change job, I would had become zombie and ended up flattened on the sole of the giants.

"Tou! nano desu."
"Nyu～ naive～?"

In a slightly separate place, Pochi-chan and Tama-chan are having a match with wooden swords.
Pochi-chan's charging speed is amazing, but Tama-chan who could avoid it is also amazing. If it's 1-on-1 Sir Zotor is stronger indeed, but if it's 2-on-1, they'd likely win. Even though they're so cute, as expected of beastkin.

Well, these two are still far.

"Well then, here I go."
"Yosh, come at me anytime."

The scale tribe woman thrusts her spear together with red glow while screaming full of fighting spirit. Sir Zotor wards it off with his shield and the spear slips away.
The scalekin woman seemingly has read that and attacks with the other end of the spear aiming at Sir Zotor's arm, but it's repelled with his sword.
The level of these two's fight is too different I can't make it into reference.
Or rather, why are they using magic weapons during training?

"I've found you! I'll have you fight me today!"

Ah, again.
The way Karina-ojousama expresses her love is really childish.
Chevalier-sama who is cheering for Pochi-chan and the others suffers from the challenge to battle.

Well, those breasts that sway as they pleases are really popular among male soldiers.... Mou, please just fall off.

Karina-sama's movement is different than from the past, it's already not in the realm of human. It looks like it's the effect of an amazing magic tool called artifact or something.

But then, the chevalier who's always able to avoid those attacks, isn't he actually quite amazing?

◇

While being healed from the sound of reed flute from somewhere, I am doing the laundry. I don't know who's playing, but it's a nice melody.

Together with the melody, nice sweet smells arrives.
Kuh, please stop the smell since I'm starving.

When I turned around, there's an elf girl who's holding a reed flute on one

hand. She's one of chevalier-sama's mistress if I'm not mistaken. Even though that person looks harmless, he's keeping seven wives and mistress for himself.

Something smells good, it seems that it's drifting from the bread-like thing that this girl is holding on her other hand.

"Drool."

I wipe it while panicking after the elf girl points it out.
I'm sorry~ it's a really delicious smell after all.

While saying "Nn.", the elf girl presents me a thin bread. I don't know what you're saying with those few words. I wonder if all elves are this taciturn? If she didn't continue with "Mouthful", I wouldn't have understood what she was saying until the end.

I bite the corner of the bread while being careful not to open my mouth too wide.

De-li-sh--!

What's this. It's too delicious. Although the karaage back then were also delicious. I don't understand how should I express this. It's soft and sweet, ah, I'd like to know more vocabularies. It seems that it's called a crepe.

"Thank you, it's very delicious. It was chevalier-sama who made it right?"
"Nn."

I see, so it's really that person.
Should I seriously try to marry into the rich household? I'm fine with being the eighth.

◇

"Erina, are you free now?"
"Yup, I only have to fold these laundries."

"Then put that aside for now, please get the carriage out."
"Un, it's fine. Which official is going out?"
"It seems that chevalier-sama has some businesses in the city."

Ooh, this is a favor from heaven!

"Leave it to me, I'll have the carriage ready at the entrance quick."
"Please do."

I was naive.

He's going to be with his wife when he's going out alright. Satou-sama is not alone, he's together with Nana-sama, the wife.
Unfortunately, the plan to marry into the rich doesn't seem to be able to be realized soon.

Intermission: Dream of Summer Day

That is dream, things that happened a long time ago, dream of distant day.

◇

"You too, let's go play together."

I was interested with a girl of the same age who was looking bashfully from behind the offering box of the shrine, so I gathered my courage and invited that girl to play.

"My name is Ichirou. How about you?"
"I am •••"
"Hee~, the name really sounds like a shrine girl."

I lead the girl by hands, taking her to the shrine ground where my cousins are playing. At first she was quiet, but after we began playing song and hide-and-seek, she lets out bright smile that wouldn't lose to her beautiful red hair while laughing.

Fun time quickly passes. The sun is already hidden between the mountains.

"Everyone, let's go home soon. You too, •••, let's go home together until the halfway."
"My house is here."

The girl said so while going back to the shrine.
I had certainly heard the girl's name, but I couldn't remember it no matter what.

◇

"Right at that time, the prince appears, and defeat the bad dragon with one swing of his sword."
"I don't like that story."

Looks like she didn't like the picture book that I tried hard to read.
The girl who sulks a bit plays with her with reddish-orange hair while pouting.

"This shrine is dedicated for a dragon god. Her name is Mizuhana-hime."

The girl sticks out her chests while looking proud.

This shrine worships a god called Ama-no-Mizuhana-hime.

"Then, then. Mizuhana-hime crossed the rainbow and came here. She was angry at a young man of the village who went to see her dancing on top of the mountain of this shrine."
"Why was she angry?"

The girl pouts because she can't remember it.

"Uu~ dunno. She was angry surely because it was not good! Don't look at the practice she said."
"She's shy huh."
"Yes, she must be!"

The girl who awkwardly folds her slender arms is nodding as if convinced by her own story.

"And then! The angry goddess-sama turned into a dragon and flew to the sky, bringing rain that continued for three days and night."
"Eeh~, wouldn't it just fine to forgive him just by poking his forehead."
"Uu~ it's alright! Because this is a legend!"

Seems that excessive retort is forbidden.

"The young man who saw the dancing on top of this mountain desperately apologized to the goddess. And then, the goddess forgave and married the

young man."

I don't understand it.
What?　that rapid development. The story must've been shortened huh.

◇

Inside the shrine's office, we're eating watermelons while listening to the cicada's sound until our ears hurt. Eating energetically to the point that it ruins her face which is slightly older than me, she bites the watermelon and spouts out the seeds.

"Hey, you're a girl, so get it in your hands and put it back on the plate."
"Ichirou is stupid! It's more delicious to eat watermelons　like this! Only children like us are allowed to do this. Stop saying those garish words."

She overreacts while messing with the green hair that has the same color as watermelons on her shoulders.
The girl is always energetic.

◇

Night at the shrine ground, we're enjoying fireworks while being accompanied with the smell of mosquito repellent.
I throb when I see the girl who wears yukata looking like an adult with her light violet hair knitted and put on the nape of her neck, making her looks amorous.

"Do you know Ichirou-kun. The deity enshrined in this shrine, Ama-no-Mizuhana-hime. She married a young man a long time ago. However, since he was a human, he passed away before long. When he was dying Mizuhana-hime promised him.『When you're reincarnated someday I will come back to your side』, she said, isn't it romantic?"

The girl whispers as if enraptured while looking at me in sitting position.

I throb looking at the girl who's far older than me showing a mischievous child-like smile.

"Does something like reincarnation even happen?"
"It does."

The girl firmly affirmed so, replying my question.

"But, it's no good if he's just reincarnated. The life span of gods are different than people. They'd be separated again."
"Isn't it fine if she just makes the person she likes become a god?"
"Even gods aren't almighty enough to grant divinity as they like."

Her words are unusually passionate for the cool her.

"It's not enough with the soul of a single person, it'd need a lot more."

I'm a bit scared with those words.

◇

I'm bringing the dog called Satou that grandpa keeps as a pet while climbing the stairs to the shrine ground.
It's a dog with strange name. Seemed that the person who gave the dog to grandpa is called Satou-san. It's really like my family to give the dog name like that.

I pass through the shrine gate with no red stone and enter the shrine ground.

"Ou! Been waiting, Satou."
"I've said to call me Ichirou when it's not in the game."
"Fufun, I was calling the dog."
"Is that right, then let's not do the game today and play outside with the dog."

When I tease the girl, her bossy attitude breaks apart and she gets

flustered.

"W, wait, if we're not there, who would save Trojan Union from Akaia Empire."
"Okay okay, let's look for a shade for the place to play."

We sit in line on the shrine's open veranda with a nice shade at the shrine ground. Satou the dog that got his leash unfastened is running around the shrine ground without losing to the summer's heat.
I take out two portable consoles from my bag--I pass one of the Jiopoke to the girl.

The girl loves to hear the clicky sounds from when the buttons are moved. She always have fun by clicking it with her small fingers before the power is turned on. We connect the two game consoles with link cable and turn on the power.

"Oh, it begins."

The game is a space war simulation game with Trojan War as the motif. Despite being a product for children, it has the concept of searching for enemies and supply replenishment.

"Muu, another surprise attack from outside the range of enemy search. That's why you're Satou nanoja."
<TLN: She refers herself with "warawa" and almost always ends her sentences with "Ja".>

She said something really unreasonable.

"Then, I'll let you use 『Map Exploration』 once on the next map as handicap."
"Yay, nanoja. Might as well let me use 『Meteor Bullets』 then."
"Eeh, 『Meteor Bullets』 is forbidden. The situation would get reversed instantly."
"That's the good part!　Just once. Kay?　It's fine with using it once～ I want to use it."

I eventually give up to the girl who pleas until her indigo hair got

disheveled. Even the lord of the manor can't win against crying child they say. I don't know what lord of manor though.

"Fuhahaha, take this nanoja."

The girl happily use 『Meteor Bullets』 and annihilate my main force.
And then, her face looks overjoyed when she captures my main battleship who has lost all its forces.

"Aah, 『Meteor Bullets』 is satisfying. Thanks to it, I even get myself the battleship as a souvenir."

The girl is in high spirit, but when she takes the battleship to her field, it changes into shock.
This game takes after Trojan War as motif. Of course, that includes the [Trojan Horse] tactic.

"Uwah, robots are coming out of the battleship. Ah, even though that carrier has just been completed. No don't, don't attack that factory, no～～～."

After the robots destroyed the supply equipments inside her army, my main force that I had hidden attacked. Although it's close, it's somehow my win in the end.

"Uu, you're cruel. You don't hold back against a small girl."
"Look, isn't it rude to not fight with all my might in a battle."
"Fuhn nanoja, I hate Satou. I'll put a curse so you'll always be with flat-chests for all your life."

That's a harsh curse even for a joke. Kyonyuu idol is the most popular girl in my class.
Let's take out another game here and change the conversation.

"Yes, yes, shall we play different game next?"
"What kind?"
"This is called RPG, it's a game that have you start weak, let you get stronger by defeating small fries, and defeat the demon lord in the end."

It's a blunt description if I do say so myself.

"Ooh, defeating demon lord huh! That's great! By the way, can we defeat demon gods?"
"There are various types of hidden boss in this game, and since there are gods and demon gods too if I'm not mistaken, we should be able to."
"That's good! Okay, let's do it Satou! Quickly start it!"

Her tension is always high, but today it's unshakable. I keep the girl company playing game until nightfall that day.
Play game only one hour a day, you could not possibly do that right.

◇

The girl is reading a thick book on the bank of the small fountain at the corner of the shrine ground.

"Good morning, what are you reading today?"
"Umu, there was this [God is Dead] writing when I was half asleep so it perked up my interest."
"Heeh, can gods die?"
"Umu, they can. However, it's just dying. If you leave them alone they will get revived. Since gods are undying."
<TLN: Same kanji as Satou's immortal/undying.>
"Can you say that as dying? What are other state of deaths?"
"Well, they do die physically. Once they die, gods become spirit bodies, they prepare their own soul, make new body, and complete the revival. Although if it's high-ranking gods, then they don't need go through such annoying procedure. Even if they die, they would get instantly revived since they're universally recognized in the world."

There, the girl laughs, 'kufufu'.

"It's just like you."

My eyes become round toward that unexpected words.

"Yes, you are Ichirou no matter what the era or the worlds. Omnipresence

as if exceeding the space-time, no matter how different I am, we always get in contact and become friend."

Before I could hear the meaning of her words, the voice of her mother calling her can be heard.

"Fumu, it's time."

The girl's mysterious blue hair turns black as if it's dripping ink.
It looks like I'm the only one who see her hair in different color.

And then, the girl with black hair talks to me politely as if she's stranger like usual.

"Hey, Suzuki-kun. If it's fine with you, would you see my Kagura dance?"

Kagura dance? Ah, Kagura dance huh.
She bashfully pulls the edge of my shirt, and I, who's charmed by her shy smile, follow her to the stage inside the shrine.

The girl changes her clothes to shrine maiden attire and begins to dance on the stage.

"Hikaru's dance is getting better right?"
"Yes, she looks like a professional Shrine maiden-san."
"Ufufu, it may not be a job since she's not getting money, but that girl is a genuine shrine maiden. The dance is for the sake of descending god to the body. Look well and burn it to your memory, Satou. It will be useful for you someday."

The one who sits beside me who is concentrating in watching the dance; I don't know if it's the girl's mother, or if it's something else.
Rather than listening to such enigmatic words, I watch the dance of my childhood friend with my whole body.

◇

I was watching my dream from bird's eye perspectives.
Even though I can't remember her name anymore, my childhood friend should have had black hair. Her age should be the same as me too.
My past memory must be mixed with the galge that had shrine stages I made myself during the college year. It's normal in a game to have characters with such colorful hairs.

However, I wonder what's with the line that has nothing to do with games?

『Forget it Ichirou, until the time it's needed. Put memories about us deep inside your heart.』

Overlapping voices of many girls whispered to me.
My consciousness sinks into deep sleep hearing those nostalgic voices.

Intermission: Satou's House Name

"House name is it?"

I was called to Nina-san's office to have me decide the house name for myself as I had been granted honorary knight.

"Isn't honorary noble title only applied for one generation? Is house name necessary?"
"Yes, it's certainly only for one generation, but there are surprising amount of honorary noble house which continue to produce more honorary nobles successively."
"Even though honorary nobles are only limited for one generation, most of them are wealthier than fallen nobles or poor nobles. They could pay for education of their children, and depending on the territory, one could buy titles with money."

Arisa who always hang around Nina-san's room during the day joins the conversation between her documents work.

"It is like that. If it continues for 10 generations, then your house would be bestowed normal chevalier or baronet title."

That's long.

"It's impossible to decide immediately right? We'll do it in 2-3 days, so decide carefully during that time."
"I recommend Tachibana."

If I'm not mistaken, the family name of Arisa past life is Tachibana.

"I'll refrain from that."
"Right, I believe there's already a chevalier called Tachibana. Please check if a name is usable for your house name or not on Yuyurina the civil official. She's more knowledgeable about it than me since she's studied them in royal capital."
"I understand, if I get the candidates to some extents, I'll check on her."

I've talked to Yuyurina-san several times before, she's a calm and taciturn official with brown braided hair. I was vigilant since she was flat, but fortunately the flag wasn't raised.

Since I catch the sight of lady Karina walking on the corridor toward here, I say my farewell to Nina-san and proceed to leave the room.

"Satou-dono, I understand that you're running away from lady Karina, but you're still a noble even at the furthest end. Stop going out from the balcony."
"I'm sorry, Nina-sama. Please overlook it."

I jump off the balcony of Nina-san's office located on the third floor.
In exchange, I hear the voice of Nina-san getting angry at lady Karina who has just gotten there. She came in without knocking again huh. What an obstinate person.

◇

Well then, house name huh. The proper one would be Suzuki, and I would also change my name to Ichirou Suzuki. However, that would be the same as declaring myself as a Japanese, and it's probably safer to not do that.

If I'm to take one from my titles, if it's god slayer, then how about [Kamisaki], or [Kanzaki]?

Satou Kanzaki

It's not bad, but it'll be hard to answer Arisa if she asks about the origin of the name.
Then, from dragon slayer, let's try to take [Ryu] word, or Dragon if it's in western style shall we?

Satou Ryu
Satou Ryuzaki
Satou Dragon

Satou Dragonslayer
Satou Slayer

Not quite there.
I've thought of using hero's name from games, but since there are people who would understand where the inspiration comes from, like Arisa or that Saga empire's hero, it's difficult.

How about using holy swords' names?

Satou Excalibur
Satou Caliburn
Satou Durandal
Satou Longinus

Something's not right.
What about the name from Japanese katana.

Satou Kotetsu
Satou Muramasa
Satou Kikuichimonji

They don't sounds right. Or rather it feels like combining modern world with period drama... those are rejected.

Hah, maybe Satou Satou is good enough~

Not good, I've hit the roadblock.
If this continues, I'll come up with a weird name. I'll go and consult this with other people to change the mood.

◇

"Fa-me~?"
"Turtles are delicious nodesu!"
<TLN: House name=kamei, turtles=kame.>

I asked Pochi and Tama since they were the closest from where I was, but they didn't even understand the meaning of [House Name].
The two are sitting beside lady Soruna while eating rice crackers shaped like bones. Recently, beside the time when they're training, they're always getting snacks from either lady Soruna in the baron living room, or the maid-san in the waiting room. You'll get fat you know?

"House name is it? Alright then, it's fine to use Donan name if you marry Karina."

Lady Soruna said so mischievously. Looks like that name is the one baron-san has used before succeeding Muno name.

Satou Donan.

It's not bad, but if it comes with lady Karina, I'll pass.
If she gets a bit calmer, I feel like she could become a friend, but right now she's an acquaintance at best. Of course, I won't say something impossible like her becoming ladylike.

"I will refrain since that sounds dreadful."
"Oh my, Karina's future is rocky huh."

I get out of the room while the lady is giggling.

◇

"I recommend Nagasaki. It was the name of my previous master."
"How about Kishreshgalza? It is the name of my family, there shouldn't be anyone who call themselves so."
"Bornean."

Those are remarks from Nana, Liza and Mia in turns.

Satou Nagasaki.
Satou Kishreshgalza.
Satou Bornean.

Nope.
Or rather, Liza, and Mia, aren't those your family names?

"What are you guys talking about?"

Lulu who has just come back to the room greets. Her eyes are shining when she hears about the decision of my house name.

"Oh my! House name is it! How about Kubooku?"

I believe Kubooku is the name of Arisa's and Lulu's kingdom.

"As expected, it'll be bad if I use Kubooku. It'll look like I'm picking a fight with the country that has invaded Kubooku."
"Then.... Ah, no, it's nothing."

Lulu who seemed to have thought of something stopped halfway. When I urge her to tell me, the name [Watari] comes out.

"It was the family name of my grandmother. She was from far away country, but the country where I was born forbade anyone besides nobles to have family name, so it wasn't used by anyone."

Satou Watari.

That sounds like Satori.
When I tell Lulu that I'll put it to candidate list, the other three are booing, so I also put the names from the three to the list. Liza wasn't saying any complaint, but I could feel it from her atmosphere.

◇

"How about asking Yuyurina-dono? She should know many kinds extinct house names y'know?"

I asked knight Zotor and retainer Hauto, and although there weren't any

good name that came out, I was told about a person that I could rely instead.

I check on the map and head toward where lady Yuyurina is.
She's in the dining room.

"Haus? Hausnemisit?"
"I'm sorry to disturb you during your meal."
"That's right chevalier-sama. In the first place, servant's dining room isn't somewhere you should often step your foot into."

I called out Yuyurina-san who had stuffed her mouth full like a hamster, but I was immediately scolded by the head-maid who was nearby.
Head-maid-san said that if a noble came close to servants' area, they would get nervous and wouldn't be able to get works done. I don't understand nobles. If it's a company, won't the executives use staff canteen?

"I-have-found-you."

Haah, someone's troublesome has come. I've thought that she would come a bit later, but it seems she's taken a shortcut. I had noticed her, but I wasn't able to run away since I was being lectured by head-maid-san.

"Now! Let's have a match like usual desuwa! I'll get a hit on you today!"

Lady Karina takes a stance while declaring so.
She's getting pretty good in this one week. Maybe due to the grappling experience with me, she's acquired [Fighting] skill level 1.

Of course, we haven't ever actually fight during all this time.

"Karina-sama! Please consider the place!"

Head-maid-san thundered off. Lady Karina, you should have been more aware of your surrounding. She's a relative of Toruma (Ossan) in that regard.

In the end, I'm not able to use names from extinct nobles from what I've heard from Yuyurina-san. It looks like I need permission from Crest

Parliament on the Royal Capital to use them.

◇

"So, have you decided?"
"I've not found a good one."
"Well, it is something that will follow you for the rest of your life. One can't decide on it so fast huh."

I haven't decided on the house name after the promised three days. There are Yuyurina-san who has come to deliver some documents to Arisa, and somehow, lady Karina in Nina-san's room.

"What~? You're puzzling over house name? Then, I have a good one in mind."
"What kind of name is it?"
"Hmm~ what-should-I-do-I-wonder."

Lady Karina is being pretentious. Annoying.

"Nina-san, I'm sorry, but please wait for some days more."
"It can't be helped huh."
"Then, if you haven't decided after two more days, it's Tachibana, alright."

Arisa, you really want to make my family name Tachibana huh?

"Wait~ please don't ignore me?"
"I'm sorry, I've forgotten."

She's not easily discouraged huh.

"How about Pendragon? It's the name of hero-sama. Orion Pendragon-sama."
"Isn't that a fictional character?"
"That's right. He's the hero from the story I love. It's a heroic story about a hero who went on a journey riding on a dragon, surpassed seven trials of the gods, and finally beat the demon lord."

The story of king Arthur mixed with Greek myth.

"He's riding a dragon is he."
"Yes, and it's not a Wyvern, but a Welsh dragon."

I think the father of king Arthur is Pendragon. Was he a hero who had slain a dragon?
It may be unexpectedly good. I have Excalibur anyway, I might even change my name to Arthur, like Arthur Pendragon.

Afterwards, I was really troubled with the house name matter for two days straight.

◇

"Then, let's begin. ■■ Name Order. 『Satou Pendragon』."

>[Name Order Skill Acquired]

I got a new name and name order skill from Yuyurina-san.

After that, I confirm on the Yamato Stone, and a new ID is prepared for me. Unlike the one for commoner, it's a silver plate with the letters engraved. I'm told that I need to have it casted with fixture magic in duke's territory later.

This time, I had changed the value on companion column before I touched Yamato Stone.

I increased my level and skills as to make it looked like I could support from behind, even if a bit unreliably and moved a bit fast. I've consulted Arisa about this on the day before.

"Fufufu, Karina Pendragon doesn't sound so bad."

I've heard dangerous remark, but let's ignore it.

"Arisa Pendragon sounds like Arthur, but the nuance is good."

Arisa is grinning, making her mouth looks like a wave.

"Ehehehe~ it'd be nice if I get to be called Lulu Pendragon someday."

Lulu, even you huh.
Of course, Lulu were only speaking to herself. If I didn't have [Straining Ears] skill I wouldn't hear it.

"Pochi Pendragon nanodesu."
"Tama Pendragon~?"

Pochi and Tama are congratulating while running around me.

"Mwuu, Bornean."
"Master, you're splendid."
"Master. Master Pendragon. Which one should I use to call you?"

Mia doesn't seem like she's given up yet. Beside her, Liza is saying something like a guardian would.
I answer, "Just master is fine.", to Nana's question.

"Then, chevalier Satou Pendragon, please take care of me from now on."
"Yes, viscount Nina Rottol."

Nina-san offers her hand, and we shake hands. This is the first time I know that there's a custom for handshakes in this world.
While gripping my hand, Nina-san gives me further homework.

"Next, you have to decide on your crest before you depart."

It's crest this time huh...

On the following day, I take lessons for socializing with high-class people from the baron and butlers, and heraldry from Yuyurina-san.
It goes without saying that I've gotten [Social] and [Heraldry] skills during those times.

——————————————————————
Name: Satou Pendragon
Tribe: Human
Level: 30
Affiliation: Territory of Baron Muno of Shiga Kingdom
Occupation: None
Rank: Chevalier
Title: None
Skill:
[Magic Art]
[Evasion]
[Training]
[Blacksmith]
[Woodcraft]
[Cooking]
[Arithmetic]
[Estimation]
[Social]
[Heraldry]
Reward and Punishment:
[Medal of Sapphire of Baron Muno Territory]
[First Rank of Baron Muno Army]
[Medal of Honor of Muno Citizens]

I've set these parameters on my companion column.
They're abnormally higher than the one on the ID from Seryuu city, but since I have not shown it when I go inside Muno city, it's probably fine.

I make it level 30; being higher than average so I won't be make light of and yet not so high as to be feared.
Since I've been seen doing blacksmithing and woodworking in the wagon, I've added them so it wouldn't look strange.
I've also added cooking since the servants have seen me made various things.
Social and Heraldry are noble-like, so I've added them.

The two medals from baron territory seem to be justified for saving the territory. Seems that either of the medals are only given for someone who

has done outstanding things.
The last medal is given to me by the influential people from the city.

Intermission: Lord's Secret

"Baronet Leon Donan, over here."
"Yes."

At the center of the chapel near the royal castle that his majesty has lead me to, there's a crystal-like thing with 20 sides shining blue light while floating. His majesty is waiting in front of that floating crystal.

"Leon, this is a City Core."

--City Core?

I stare at the City Core as if I'm charmed.

"This is the reason that makes a king and governing lords different than other nobles."
"...Reason, is it?"

His majesty solemnly nods at my parroting words of question.

"That's right. The City Core draws abundant magical power from The Source, it's an artifact that exist for the purpose of letting the person who becomes its master to make use of that vast magic power."

As if answering to his majesty's voice, the City Core flashes blue light once.

"Even if it's said that this City Core is an artifact, it's unknown if the core is made by someone somewhere. There was a certain king who once asked the gods, but the answer never came."
"Then, just who is..."
"I don't know. At the very least, the method to create one is already lost at the present time. Once, the Bornean sage, Trazayuya-dono, attempted to recreate one, but he could only make a counterfeit with much lower performance at best."

I wait for his majesty to continue his words.

I wonder what's the real intention of his majesty for showing me this artifact?

"The story has diverted, I'm sorry."
"No, I've heard some really interesting things."
"Although it goes without saying that this talk is a secret to anyone but the one who will succeed royalty's or lords' house. Revealing this to others is useless."
"--I understand."

Unpleasant sweats flow on my back.
Why would his majesty tell me such secret?

Even though I'm a relative of duke Oyugock, I'm not of the main family, and nothing more than a baronet.
Just what is the king--

"Now then, let's get back to the topic. The lord could establish this City Core to people so they could use it and uses ritual magic. Truly various magic; you could create walls that could defend against attack from high-ranking demon, attack magic that reduce armies to ashes, or climate magic that could manipulate weather."

Even manipulating weather!

Handling enormous amount of magic power from The Source, it could even resist high-ranking demon that could equal sub-gods.

"That is like--"

I hesitate to continue the words on the verge of my mouth.
Since the words are like sacrilege against gods.

"Like a living god is it?"

However, his majesty continued to speak those words lightly.

"There is no need to worry. Gods will not needlessly interfere kings or lords. It has been decided with the covenant between the gods and the

ancient kings."

The king said so, but there was a large country comparable to the the old empire that got destroyed after angering gods.
Shouldn't we be careful not to let out many sacrilegious words?
Though a coward like me isn't able to remonstrate the king.

"The story keeps wandering off. The lord is special precisely because they could wield the core power to transcend human."

His majesty repeat the story once again as if emphasizing it.

"The rank of the governing lords depend on the scale of The Source they control. Once, a lord raised his rank followed by numerous cities he had."

His majesty stops talking and judge my reaction.
I timidly nods at his majesty to show my understanding.

"And then a king is a person who's followed by his lords. And then, an emperor is a person followed by kings."

The difference between king and emperor is like that... I've thought that it's just a difference in naming.
I express a question that has crossed my mind to his majesty.

"Then, are guards and viceroy lords too?"
"No. They're both representatives that lords have given authority to act on their behalves. They could borrow the power of the City Core, but the master is still the lord."

--I see.

With this I think I understand the reason why rebellion that guards and viceroy have caused in the history is suppressed.
The reason why the rebellion have been able to be quenched isn't written in the history, but after seeing this, I finally can understand.

"Also, as the holder of City Core, you can appoint new nobles in behalf of the king."

So that's the reason why marquis Lloyd isn't able to appoint chevaliers.
I've always thought it's strange that a high-ranking noble couldn't appoint new nobles when earls of neighboring country could, but I understand now.

"[Nobles] are originally what people who control cities are called. The rank of nobles is indication of the level of authority a representative had. The one protecting the city is either baronet or a baron, the city's viceroy must be a viscount at least, those aren't just customs but in accordance to the authority level of the City Core."

I desperately try to understand his majesty talks, but it's too difficult to understand it all at once.

"Oy oy, you should understand this."

Ashamed with myself, I'm going to apologize to his majesty, but when I hear the majesty's next words, I get so dumbfounded, nothing is coming out of my mouth.

"Leon, today I will grant you Muno house name. Go to Muno city, release the cursed and blocked City Core, and become the new lord."

--Muno?

The same territory where nobles who've announced their candidacy to become its governing lords die one by one, becoming the lord of the [Cursed Territory]?

However, this is a royal order. I do not have the right to refuse.
The majesty has talked about the City Core earlier probably because he has maximum faith in me.

Right now, the thing I can do is to solemnly lower my head and answer, [Your will].

◇

"Are you nervous?"

An old lady with miko outfit looks at me worryingly.

"No, head miko-sama. I, I am okay."
"You don't have to force yourself. Even for me who has long life of confronting monsters, standing in front of this door is making me trembling."

She probably said that to reassure me.
Latenion head miko lets out a young smile belying her age.

I take a deep breath, and together with the head miko, go toward the underground sanctuary on the Muno city where the City Core is.
The people who descend the spiral stairs to the underground sanctuary are only the head miko and me.

Originally, this passage is only to be used by the lord, but for the sake of exorcising the curse that the [Undead King] has left, I'm accompanied by the head miko this time.

I feel more sick each time I step down the stair.
It seems that many nobles die the moment they step on this stair.

It's probably safe this time because I'm with a head miko who holds the title [Saintess].

I continue following head miko while feeling nauseous.
In front of the sanctuary, the head miko touch the walls as if falling.

"Leon, looks like it's the limit soon."
"I understand. I'm going to go alone from here..."

I step into the sanctuary while holding my consciousness.

--My vision is shaking.

Bam, I hear the sound of my own body that has collapsed as if it's coming

from other's, I look up.
A semi-transparent black shadow is floating in front of my eyes.

『O intruder. I am [Undead King] Zen--Its shadow. O pure person, show me that you deserve to become the lord.』
"Lord is--"

I faint in the middle of my words, and I get rescued by the golems controlled by royal court magicians that his majesty has deployed.

I tried challenging it for three times after this, but it was over right whenever I had just arrived to the sanctuary.
I wasn't able to grasp the City Core, but for my accomplishment of getting to the sanctuary, I was appointed to be the lord of this land.

Since I'm just a temporary lord, I am not able to tap the magic power of The Source to manipulate weather, resulting in famines often happening in the territory, and I'm not able to stop people from leaving this territory.

I was only able to become the true lord after 16 years.
I had to wait until a merchant who had just become an adult uncovered the plot of the demon by himself, and even saved the territory from the swarms of undead monsters.

◇

I want to grant honorary knight to Satou-kun for his achievements, but since I don't have the City Core, I don't have any way to confer peerage to him.
I could ask Nina-dono to write a letter of recommendation for duke Oyugock, but I'd like to reward him with my own hands.

I proceed to the sanctuary where the City Core sleeps after 16 years, and over there I notice that the curse that has always been there is gone.
I don't know if the caster has died, or if the silver masked hero who defeats the demon has dissolved it.

I walk to the front of the City Core, and a voice that's neither man or woman greets me.

『Welcome, qualified person. Do you hope to become the lord of this land?』

This is probably words from the will of the City Core itself.
I answer clearly.

「I do.」
『The registration is complete. I serve lord Leon Muno from now on』

Lights separate from the City Core, one becomes a ring on my finger, the other flies beneath me.
When I concentrate on the ring that I've received, things that could be done with City Core come into my mind. Apparently, the demon wanted to do something by stealing the magic power from The Source. For the time being, I do ritual magic for controlling weather, I should be able to grant him rank too.

"■■■■ Weather Control. Warming."
『Executing Command. The average temperature of the territory will raise by 15°C for the next few days.』

I don't know how much 15°C is, but if I could decrease the freezing cold, the people who die from it would probably decrease too.
Either way, there's not enough magic power for anything more than this.

On the next morning, I do the ritual of conferring peerage using the City Core without any problem.

I go to the balcony in the early morning, and is surprised at the warmth. Usually, my breath would becomes white. The cold of midwinter has changed into the warmth of autumn in just one night.

I'm trembling under the sunlight warm.

--It's excessively powerful.

The City Core brings power beyond human to a person.
I vow to use this power for the sake of people without drowning on it.

Death March

- Volume 7 -

7-1. To the Hometown of the Dwarves

Satou's here. When I was on business trip, I sometimes caught sight of people who was transferring for job getting sent off on the platform for the bullet train.
I wonder how does it feel to get sent off like that? I've thought of such thing, but when I actually experience it, it doesn't feel bad at all.

◇

"Are you leaving no matter what?"

Viscount Nina who has come to see us off tries to detain me.
Behind her, more than 20 servants and maids have also come.

The maids aren't wearing the plain uniforms they've worn two weeks ago, but frilly maids clothes that one usually sees in Akihabara. Even though the skirt cover down to the ankle, it's still incomparably cuter than before.
Of course the mastermind is Arisa. Somehow the budget for it hasn't come from the baron but from my pocket instead, but if this is the result then I can consent.
However, even though I've heard that it would be completed in spring, it's done already. It might have touched the heartsrings of the tailor. Cute is justice they say.

By the way, it's early morning right now, the sun has just risen on the horizon.
To be honest, I didn't expect that they would come for the farewell like this.

I could see Pochi and Tama receiving something from lady Soruna at the edge of my view. Looks like the thing that entered their small purses are sweets.

As for the other, the men like the Baron, Hauto, and Zotol have also come.

Lady Karina isn't here.
I've asked the maid who's attending her room not to wake her up. Since she's always attacking me every day during the past two weeks here, I want to avoid troublesome thing when we're departing.

More than that, the maids that have been creeping up on me since awhile ago are scary.
Everyone folds their arms and stare at me with teary eyes.

Er~rr?
No one is going to start a fight right?

"Chevalier-sama, please don't go."

Without hesitation, a slender red-haired maid steps up and shouts while clinging to me.

I'd love a bit more volume, regrettable.

Starting with that girl, the maids begin to cling on me in turns.
Kuh, the maids with loli bodies are too fast, I've lost my chance to get in contact with the maids with superb volumes.
Arisa kicks me from behind while saying, "Stop grinning.", but I ignore her.

"Chevalier-sama, please stay here forever."
"That's right, if chevalier-sama is gone, who would make crepes."
"Rather than crepes, I want karaage again!"
"Leave only Pochi-chan here~."
"What are you saying, Tama-chan is cuter right."
"Better yet, become my husband and make meals for me forever please."

Even though I don't think it's because I'm popular, everyone are aiming for foods, or Pochi's and Tama's cuteness huh.

Oh?

Since I feel familiar sensations on my legs, I drop my line of sight--

It's Pochi and Tama. What are they doing hugging my legs?

The twos look up with sparkling eyes. I wonder if they're thinking some new play like Oshikura Manju?
<TLN: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oshikura_Manju>

"Everyone! I understand your reluctance, but don't trouble chevalier-sama."
"That's right, we have pound cakes made by chevalier-sama in the dining room. You can eat it after you've done your morning works."

The head maid claps her hands, and the maids step back.
Then after the chef's remark, they fall back as if pulling tides. It's a bit lonely.

"You haven't eaten breakfast right? It can't be compared to chevalier-sama's creation, but please eat this if it's fine with you."
"Thank you very much. I gratefully accept."

I pass the bento I've received from Chef-san to Lulu on the wagon.

"Really, won't you at least leave Arisa-dono here."
"No can do~ I can't live if I'm not beside darling."

Who's darling!
I ignore Arisa's careless remark, and say may farewell to Nina-san and the baron. I've received letters of introduction for nobles on various cities from Nina-san. I've also been asked to deliver several letters for influential nobles from Nina-san.

"I'll come back here after 1-2 years of training in the labyrinth city."
"Yes, we'll be waiting. At that time, we'll get territory rebuilt so we can return the money we've borrowed from you even for a little."
"Yes, I'm expecting it."
"I sincerely ask you to take care of Pochi-kun and Tama-kun."

The baron is giving off atmosphere as if he's sending his daughters for wedding. He's way too entranced by the cuteness of the two.
The debt that Nina-san talks about is 250 gold ingots that I've lent for rebuilding the territory. It's not enough to completely rebuild it with this, but it'd be usable for operating funds. The reason why I use ingots is because it'd look like hidden assets. I made it by crushing large quantity of

gold coins. Since they were doubting where it came from, I showed them the magic bag <<Holding Bag>> and explained it. I told Nina-san that I was heading to the labyrinth city for the sake of Liza's and the others' training.

Liza and the others are already riding the horses, so I get in the wagon.
We leave the Muno castle behind while waving back to the people who keep on waving here.

◇

Now then, even though there have been various things happening during this two weeks, the one that's immediately apparent is this wagon.

I was allowed to freely use the workshop left from the marquis era, so I remodeled the wagon as much as I wanted to. I mainly tried to remodel the suspension system by strengthening the shock absorption. Unfortunately, I couldn't make anything fancy for the shock absorption.
The wagon is now pulled by four horses, increased from two before, so I'm expecting speed increase. Especially since the horses that Mia and Tama have ridden have leveled up are now pulling the wagon, it would be more effective.

For the sake of avoiding thieves, Liza and Nana wear armors and ride the horses. The baron has given a horse for Nana from the same species that Liza is riding, Shuberien. The full plate armors that the two wear are my creations. When I was taking Nana's size, there were some lucky situations that arose, but Mia hindered them all. I think Mia's intuition is too good.

Needless to say, the reason why the ones riding the horses are not Pochi and Tama is because they're too short, they'd look like children from afar, and that'd invite thieves rather than repelling them.

Mia is riding a horse.
The reason is the horse that Mia is riding itself. In truth, it's not a horse, it's a unicorn that has been sold illegally on the black market.

Even in this world, unicorns are being sold for their horns since they're

effective medicines for all kind of sickness. I saved this unicorn when it was going to to be sold to people with eccentric taste in food after it got its horn cut.

The business of selling unicorns is forbidden in the entire Shiga kingdom, not just in baron Muno territory.

I wanted to return it to the place where other unicorns were with Mia, but since it didn't have horn, it couldn't get accepted into the herds.

The horn is seen as a recovery item by other races, but for unicorn itself, it's an important organ. Without the horn, an unicorn is not only unable to use its race-specific abilities, but it also loses the way to communicate to its friends. According to the indication from AR, unicorns are not monsters but belong to mythical beasts category.

Even the baron administrative was troubled with it, but since the unicorn got attached to our Mia right from the beginning, Mia began to gradually take care of it. We'll take it to Bornean forest together with Mia, and let it live in peace there.

"Lulu, I'll change your place as the coachman."
"Don't do that, master has become a noble, so when we're at the place where other people could see, master should let the servant to be the coachman."

Since I get scolded by Lulu, I give up on being the coachman and sit beside her. It's cute that she's still holding the rein properly even while scolding me.

"The flirting guy is here huh~"

As if estimating the right time, Arisa snuggles on my waist while protesting in monotone voice. Furthermore, she purposely puts her face between me and Lulu.

"Oh Arisa, burned with jealousy are you."

Lulu pats Arisa's hair while smiling.

There, Pochi and Tama climb on Arisa as if flattening her.

"Ugeh."
"Flirt~?"
"Prohibited nano desu."

The two are probably happy because it's been awhile since it's only us together.

"Prohibited."

Mia who's riding the horse on the side poke my shoulders while sulking a bit, probably because she's lonely.

The wagon gets out of the Muno city and head toward the highway.
We're speeding up from there. Since we've been going slow in the city, now the wagon advances close to three times faster.
The leveled-up horses speeding up the wagon don't bring only good things.
The countermeasure I've made for the vibration goes to waste.

"Au, the vibration is harsh."
"Even though it's quite better than before, it's still too harsh I guess? Lulu I'll take your place, so you can sit on the Float Seat with Arisa."
"But."
"You don't have to be reserved, it's alright."
"Yes, I understand."

Float Seat is a chair made with magic circuit that have properties of opposing magnets. On top of having low weight limit, it also needs to be recharged with magic power every 30 minutes, so it couldn't be used on the wagon's body. It still needs some improvements.

If I could downsize it a bit more, I could use it on the coachman's seat.

"Fuh, I'm revived."
"My bottom isn't hurt, but I feel nauseated."
"I'll give you medicine if you feel sick, so say if you are."
"Yes."

In exchange of the two who are sitting on the back seat, Pochi and Tama sit beside me.

"Next to master～?""Nano desu."

Come to think of it, since we were busy with various things when we were in the baron territory, we hadn't been together much beside the time when we were sleeping. I decide to pamper the two until they're satisfied today.

◇

The wagon gets out of the baron territory four days later.
During that time, thieves showed up on the radar, but their scout only loitered around without attacking us even once. So having cavalries outside does help after all.

Our route is not to the capital of Oyugock dukedom, but the slightly off-course self-governing dominion of the dwarves.
The self-governing dominion is inside Oyugock dukedom, about four days away from baron Muno territory.

Of course, our purpose is sightseeing.
It'd wasteful to avoid the live townscape of the dwarves so, might as well.

Incidentally, there's also the matter about the letter that viscount Nina has asked me to deliver.

After advancing through the highway located beside a river with reddish-brown water, we arrive at the hometown of the dwarves.

7-2. At the Hometown of the Dwarves (1)

Satou's here. I remember getting surprised at the fact that even the dwarven women have beard on the first fantasy novel I've read.
I'm not also sure about the loli dwarves from the recent days, but it'd be troubling if I have to choose between them and bearded dwarven women.

◇

Dwarves are typically said to live in caves, but from the information I've collected with All Map Exploration, about half of them live normally in the fortress. The other halves are exactly like that typical impression, they're living on the caves next to the city.

This self-governing dominion of the dwarves isn't that wide. It's a valley of around 20 kilometers wide in radius. Inside the dominion, there's a city called Bollhart, and two villages. The city has population of 30 thousands people, there are 20 thousands dwarves with the levels averaging at 5-6, four thousands ratmen, two thousands rabbitmen, two thousands humans, one thousands weaselmen, and the other 1000 are other demi-humans.
There is no elf. I wonder if they're in bad term?
There are a lot weaselman and human merchants from what I see on their occupations and skills.

There are about 10 people who are higher than level 40 among the dwarves. The highest leveled one is a dwarf called Dohar. If I'm not mistaken, he's the dwarf that makes Toruma (Ossan)'s dagger. His level is 51. As expected of dwarves. There are a lot of veterans.

There is no demon, transported or reincarnated person. Looks like it would be peaceful this time.

There are fields around the city, but the ones who're plowing them are not dwarves, but ratmen, rabbitmen, and other various beastmen. Seems they're not exactly slaves.

We're joining the queue to enter Bollhart city at the front of the gate.
I stop the wagon at the end of the queue and wait for our turn.

"I think we're the 20th in line? There are quite a lot huh."
"That's right."

Arisa climbs up my body and look over the queue.
Someone is pulling my sleeves, when I look to the side, Pochi, Tama, and even Mia are waiting for their turns. Since my clothes would get wrinkled if they climb it, I put them on my shoulders. Since Mia is the only one who wears skirt, I don't put her on my shoulder, but instead, I hold her waist and raise her up.

"I'm against discrimination."
"This is not discrimination, but distinction. If you're wearing pants instead, I'd put you on my shoulder."
"Mwuu."

Among the carriages that are waiting for their turn, about half of them are ridden by human.

"Pochi, Tama, keep your attention for any thieves on the back."
"A~ye."
"Roger nano desu."

Liza who had just come back from scouting the gate gave direction to Pochi and Tama.

"Master, weaselmen seem to be going in and out of this city. Please be careful since they're shrewd fellows."
"Yes, I understand. Thank you Liza."

If I remember correctly, weasel men tribe is the one who have destroyed Liza's village.

"Onii-san, won't ye buy potatoes? It's delicious see?"

A weasel woman is trying to sell potatoes with awkward words. Seems it's

one copper coin each. Three times the market price. I wonder why am I hearing her like she has fake Chinese accent.

"Onii-san, this yakitori is more delicious than potatoes from that potato girl. I've put a lot of Bollhart salt see? They're three copper coins apiece."
"Mister, meat is better, the taste of the grilled mother frog from the mine basement will surely satisfy you."

Are those mother frogs alright to eat?
It smells nice, but we've just eaten so I turn down their offers. Pochi and Tama look a bit disappointed, but eating too much is bad for your health.

The ones who come to sell things to us that are waiting for our turns aren't only the weaselmen, but also ratmen, rabbitmen and children, however, I only look at the market price of those without buying them.

Mia who has bought something from the front comes back. She's eating something.

"Satou."

Mia presents the yellow stalk thing she's eating in front of my mouth, so I eat it.

Sweet.
It tastes like flower's nectar rather than sugar. It reminds me of the time when I suck up nectars on the roadside flowers during my childhood. Nostalgic.

"Aah!"
"Just now, it's an indirect kiss right?! then, next, is me."

Reproaching voices pour down from Arisa behind, and Lulu on the side. Indirect kiss, we're not middle schoolers. No wait, Lulu is around that age huh.

Arisa extends her hand while coming here, but before she could, Mia nabs the stalk back. She quickly puts it in her mouth and shows V-sign toward here.

Since Arisa is making a noise, "Mukkii" behind, I want you to stop with the provocation. Look, even Lulu's eyes become teary.

Right at that time, a weasel person selling sweet stalks comes, so I buy it for everyone.
Somehow everyone made me hold the stalks in my mouth in turns, but I think I'd lose if I mind it.

◇

In the end, we're finally able to get inside after 10 minutes.

We get preferential treatment from dwarven soldiers who come to check on Liza's magnificent armor.

It looks like nobles get prioritized. Even though I'm just of the lowest ranking honorary noble, it still applies. When we're getting inside, I'm the only one who need to show my ID, while my companions don't. They only trivially look in the wagon, and don't investigate or ask for the tax for entering the city.

Is it a special privilege?
But then, like this, some unscrupulous nobles would be able to smuggle things.

The first time I see dwarves, they're as small, wide and stout as I've imagined. They're about 130cm high. The dwarven women are like dwarven men without beard version. Since they're not like the legal loli that often appear in recent games, I'm relieved. No more little girls.

◇

"Nice to meet you, Chevalier Pendragon. I've certainly received the letter from viscount Rottol. Is that courageous woman in good health?"
"Yes, she's taking the command energetically. You could call me Satou if it's

fine with you."

I'm having a chat with Driar-shi, the mayor, after I deliver him the letter from Nina-san.
Liza and the others are relaxing in another room, but Arisa is here somehow. That Arisa is talking very formally, far from how she usually is, with Driar-shi.

"Driar-sama, as is written in the letter, we'd like permission for sending exchange students here."

Hoo, Arisa. This is the first time I've heard about that though? Arisa who has noticed my glance look at me with a face that's as if saying, "I didn't tell it?". I'll poke her forehead later.

"Fumu, I was taken care by viscount Rottol when I was studying on the royal capital. I can accept if it's just a few exchange students."

Driar-shi answered while opening the letter. The lord of this self-governing dominion isn't this person, but his father, Dohar-san, is it alright to agree without his consent?

"It's alright, my father has entrusted me with the city unless it's a serious matter."

It seems to be alright. Good.
However, I think that the territory's technology is an important enough matter, or maybe they're taking stance of "If you can steal our technology, do it"?

"According to the letter, Satou-dono is doing blacksmithing, would you like to see our workshop if that interest you?"
"By all mean!"

Ooh, what a windfall.
Nina-san has done a good job.

◇

"This is the greatest blast furnace in this city."

It's a 20 meters high building.
There's also a window to put fuel coal below the furnace, half-naked dwarves and beastmen are throwing coals to it while getting themselves blacked. I could only see white smoke from the outside, I wonder how are they dealing with the dirty smoke? Well, there must be some sort of absurdity (fantasy) going on there.

"This is a wonderful facility."

My words are not flattery. The facility's scale isn't inferior compared to the ironworks I've seen in the previous world.
The people here are me, Driar-shi, and a dwarven woman who looks like a secretary. She's Jojori-san, Driar-shi's daughter. Arisa and the others have gone to the city after receiving letter for Nina-san. They're looking for a merchant who's going to Muno-city to deliver the letter.

We're observing from a place that looks like VIP seat, slightly away from the furnace. It's quite hot here, but it seems that it's still better than the place with insulation magic applied. It's hotter if we go outside.

According to Driar-shi's explanation, about 30% of the iron ingot used in Shiga kingdom are made here.

Next, we visit converter and pressure facilities successively. In the pressure facility, people who look like magicians are putting magic power into magic tool like thing in rotation. Everyone have dark circles under their eyes, looks like it's quite a hard labor. Originally, seems that there are more people here, but they've been dispatched on another level for different matter, so now they're in shortage. Well, Um. Do your best. I cheer on the floundering magicians inside my heart.

There are no heavy machineries, but in exchange, about 3 meter tall people from the tribe called Little Giant are carrying ores, finished iron plates and steel materials around.

I wonder if the facilities for Mithril are secrets, they're not showing me it. It looks like it's in the underground caves.
I guess I'll ask about it.

"Are facilities related to Mithril located in the underground?"
"Y, you know your stuff. Did you hear it from viscount Rottol?"
"No, I've heard from a merchant acquaintance that the Mitrhil products from this town are wonderful."
"Is that so, I'd really love to show you there, but we need permission from my father if we want to visit the underground facilities."

Driar-shi folds his short arms while frowning. Seemingly unable to see Driar-shi's grimacing, Jojori-san gives a suggestion.

"Father, if that's the case, shouldn't you try to ask grandfather. Even if it's grandfather, he wouldn't tell a person he's just met to suddenly forge a sword."

Jojori-san, that's a flag I think.

7-3. At the Hometown of the Dwarves (2)

Satou's here. Ironworks often come up in drama or theatrical play, but isn't it not the case with light novel?
Even though the leading role usually does a lot of blacksmith-related things, it's strange.

◇

"Then let me see you forge a sword. We'll talk after that."

Jojori-san?
I look to her, but she averts her eyes.

We've come to elder Dohar's workplace after passing through less-than-one-and-a-half meter high tunnel. There are also numerous high leveled dwarves forging swords inside the room.
They're all good. Every sword's offense, sharpness, endurance and other parameters are 50% higher than the ones available in the city.

The word earlier was addressed to me after I introduced myself to him.

"Father, Satou-dono is an acquaintance of viscount Rottol, and--"
"Umu, I'm indebted to Nina, but this and that are different story. I can understand people's nature from how they forge swords. Zajir, heat up a mithril ingot."
"Uss, Shishou."

Driar interceded, but elder Dohar quickly proceeded with the trial.
The dwarf with gray beard, Zajir, offers me the seat before the prepared ingot and tools.
Well, since I've tried blacksmithing once in Muno city, I mostly understand the procedures, I'll try this once again. The skill is MAX anyway, I should be able to do it somehow.

I let the ingot to become red hot, and put it on the anvil. I gently strike it with the smith hammer.

Clink.

Huh? Something doesn't feel right?
Elder Dohar seems to have sensed my hesitation, he takes the hammer and similarly strikes the ingot. After hitting it once, he calls Zajir-san and punches Zajir on the head with his fist.

"Idiot, how many decades have you dealt with mithril. Haven't I told you to always be at the workshop when you're melting the ingot!"
"Uss, Shishou."

I don't really understand, but it seems that there's a problem with the ingot Zajir-san has prepared.
The slight sense of incongruity was because of that huh.

"Arright, let's go to the mithril furnace. Follow me, young 'un."
"Yes."

Looks like elder Dohar is going to guide me directly. I haven't forged a sword, but I've probably passed the test. Driar-san and Jojori-san are also following from behind. Zajir-san has gone earlier, I wonder if there's some kind of preparation.

I don't know what kind of furnace it'd be, but I'm going to enjoy it.

◇

The blast furnace for mithril is made from a metal that's strong against heat, Hihiirokane--something with Japanese-style name after a long while.

Zajir-san and other blacksmiths are making noise there, but everyone is lying down on the floor.

Apparently, this furnace is not fueled with coal, but with magic power in

order to make it works.

Looks like the blacksmiths have ran out of magic power, and they're currently resting. Everyone here is a veteran with level higher than 30. Everyone has blacksmith and some kind of magic skills. The situation might be the same as the blast furnace above, with fewer people available than usual.

Apparently, they're waiting for their magic power to recover in two hours. Elder Dohar's wrinkle become deeper and he's shouting, but there's nothing they can do without magic power. I wonder if he has also reached that conclusion, his argument turns here.

"Young 'un, since you're carrying short stick, are you a spell-user? If you're confident with your magic power, then put it into that furnace."
"Wait, father, don't make our guest act like your disciples."
"There's no problem if it's just magic power."

Driar objects, but I also want to look at the working furnace fast, so I gladly comply.

I put in my magic power.
I guess 200-300 MP should be enough?
It gets sucked rapidly. There's no response.

10.

20.

There's no lamp or some kind indication for when if it's enough, I guess I'll put the amount at the level where the surrounding aren't going to be surprised.

100.

200.

300.

Oh, the fallen people's faces slightly change. I should stop here huh. 300 MP should be normal for a magician with slightly higher level than 30.
Still, seeing this reaction, wouldn't this able to accept 1000MP?

While acting like I'm wiping sweats that don't actually come out, I stop the infusion of magic power.

"Fuh, this furnace is amazing. Looks like it can still accept more."
"Umu."

Elder Dohar nods, and the surrounding people begin to move, the mithril refinery starts.

Jojori-san presents me sunglasses-like thing.

"Since it would hurt your eyes, please take this. Please don't stare at the fire even after you put it on."

I accept it while saying my thanks. It's pitch dark after I put it on. I could only faintly see the mithril furnace. As I stare harder.

>[Night Vision Skill Acquired]

I get the skill after all this time. After I activate it, I become able to see like normal even though I'm wearing sunglasses.

"I'm igniting it! Everyone, make sure to put yer' shade tools."

Uwah, this is dangerous. At this rate, there's no point in wearing the sunglasses.
I immediately close my eyes, but I'm late for an instant. White afterimage burned into my eyes.

>[Light Radiation Adjustment Skill Acquired]

Am I a robot! I activate it while cursing. I'd have liked this skill before it happens.
I open my eyes while feeling the self-recovery skill restoring my retina.

The temperature rises while the vermilion band around the furnace is mysteriously moving. Can you understand if I say that I'm seeing the inside of the furnace like with CT-scan? The AR indicates that the temperature reaches 3000 degree. The temperature of the ironworks that I've seen earlier is 1600 degree. Looks like mithril is substantially more resistant to heat.
<TLN: The author doesn't state which standard he's using for temperature but it's most likely Celsius.>

"Umu, it's a nice vermilion."

I don't really understand, but elder Dohar seems to be satisfied while looking at the light leaking from the furnace.

Seems that the furnace could refine 100 kilograms of ingot in one go.
When the heat cools down, beautiful silver ingots with slight green tinge are completed.

Since this has taken quite a bit of time, Driar-shi has gone back to the city leaving Jojori-san here.

Elder Dohar sees the completed ingot, but then he suddenly raises his arm, and strike it with a small hammer, confirming the sound. He chooses several ingots that Zajir then carries.

"Young 'un, come here. I'll have you strike with phase hammer."
"Shishou, it's impossible for a human kid to use phase hammer."
"Noisy, don't butt-in my decision."

I wonder what's the original meaning of phase hammer that elder Dohar is saying.

"Young 'un, don't think you can sleep 'til morning. Jojori, meat, there's that smoked basilisk meat right. Bring it whole here. Let's fill our stomaches first."

Is Basilisk edible. Or rather, it's no good to not eat something that's been presented huh~

I ask Jojori-san who's going to go back to fetch food to bring message to Arisa and the others and arrange for their meal. Though, since they're going to stay in the guest mansion of the mayor, there's probably no problem.

◇

It's exactly a lump of iron--
<TLN: Berserk reference.>

Putting aside the joke, the great hammer that Zajir-san bring is an unrefined lump of metal. Looks like it's an alloy made from iron and mithril.

What the heck is this? It's being lifted lightly, but isn't this at least one ton heavy?

"What's wrong young 'un. If it's just that much, dwarves could lift it on one hand. Put out your spirit!"

Dwarves are amazing. This, with one hand huh.
Zajir-san actually lifts it on one hand. He's trying to appeal to Jojori-san, but she thoroughly ignores him. Needless to say, Dohar-san put his fist on Zajir-san who falls then.

It's not like I can't lift the great hammer, but since my body is light, it's hard to get the balance right. My balance shakes off several times as I'm learning. When I think about it, I might have not struggled if I just activate Transport skill.

While I'm learning to swing the great hammer, elder Dohar is checking the inside of the a jar that his disciples have brought.

"This is a bit weak. Bring out a stronger one."
"Shisou, we only have that for now."
"Then, have Ganza compound it."
"Ganza is having a meeting with the Gnomes, so he won't be back until tomorrow."

Elder Dohar looks like he's going to explode. It seems the blacksmiths use some kind of medicines. If I know the recipe I could compound it instead, but it's probably not something that could be taught to outsider.

"Jojori, anyone's fine, bring me an alchemist who could compound."

So sketchy.
If anyone's fine, then I'll step up.

"Dohar-sama, if anyone's fine, then shall I compound it?"
"Hn? You've done alchemy too huh. Yosh, then I'll leave it to you."

A prompt decision. Starting with Zajir-san, the disciples are becoming upset. It seems they're not people who could say something directly face-to-face.

The recipe is hidden in an unexpected way. Instead of tablewares with the scales of the ingredients on the shelf, pots with raw material are lined up in accordance with the compounding order. Lastly, I have to finish it by putting it on the magic bestowing stand, but since the compounding is one of a kind, the setting is fixed.
I don't know the content of the jar, but thanks to [Analysis], [Appraisal] skills, and AR indicators, I've mastered the way to make [Secret Medicine of the Dwarves].

Elder Dohar checks on the medicine I've made, and then nods seriously.

"Good work. Let's boot Ganza out and have you replace him."

I'm not hearing elder Dohar's joke.

I follow elder Dohar to a different blacksmithing room than the first one. There's a small furnace made from hihiirokane inside. This one is for melting ingot, unlike the one for refining earlier. The anvil is also made from iron and mithril alloy. I wonder what's the liquid used for cooling called [Dwarf Water].
Zajir-san answers normally when I ask him. It's a 3:1 mixture of oil and spirit. I refrain myself from retorting, like 'it's more like [Dwarf Oil] rather than [Dwarf Water]', since the mood has become a bit tense.

"The preparation is complete."
"Yosh, let's do it."

Looks like it's quite an honor to help elder Dohar's phase hammer strike, the gazes from the surrounding disciples are painful.
If you have any complaint, I'd like you to tell it to elder Dohar.

I ignore the jealousy from the neighbors and concentrate here. I'll enjoy this rare chance of doing blacksmith together with a famous swordsmith.

7-4. At the Hometown of the Dwarves (3)

Satou's here. The sake is only after you've turned 20! It was the favorite phrase of my father when my middle school self accompanied him drinking after dinner. That phrase might have been unexpectedly important.

◇

The next morning, the sword is completed.
I've struck enough to see it on my dream.
The dwarf's secret medicine was used when the mithril was being heated up in the furnace. Since one of the ingredient is magic core powder, it might be for dwarf-style magic weapon. Looks like the system is different than magic weapon made with magic liquid.

"We finished without changing shift huh. If you're want to seriously train, come here anytime. Someone like you will surpass me immediately."

Bang, elder Dohar slams my back.
Guho. It's about as painful as Wagahai-kun's tail attack. If you don't mind the one on the receiving one, they could die you know?

"You're quite good for a human!"
"Agreed, aren't you actually a beardless dwarf?"
"I didn't think that anyone other than Dohar-shi could swing that great hammer until morning existed."
"You're very welcome anytime here."

Uun, I've just swung the great hammer until morning as instructed by elder Dohar, but it seems I've been approved by the dwarf blacksmiths. I'm happy and all, but the beardless thing is none of their business. It should grow in 5-6 years. ...Probably.

Elder Dohar has gone somewhere while carrying the completed sword, and the other dwarves go to get breakfast.

I wake up Jojori-san who's sleeping on the corner of the room and am also going to get breakfast together with her.

◇

After the breakfast, I was called to a hall near the basement. It seems that this place blows through two layers, it's four meter high until the ceiling.

"Try swinging it."

I receive the presented sword. Apparently, elder Dohar has added ornaments that also acts as an anti-slip on the sword.
The type of the completed sword is of double-edged bastard sword. It's only about 70-80% as heavy as swords made from iron. When I pick it on my hand, it feels a bit light. I think if sword is too light, it wouldn't be as powerful though...

When I take a stance, it feels firmer than the sword I've made before. I wonder if the balance is good?
I could swing better with this.

I swing it lightly.
It feels nice.

I try to swing faster this time.
I could feel air resistance if it's a cheap sword, but, I don't feel one with this sword, just like with holy swords. Yup, it's a nice sword.

"Now, put in your magic power and try it."

Elder Dohar who has been watching me swinging sword gives me an additional order.
Since Magic Edge is quite a rare skill, I guess it's fine to just put magic power normally?

I put about 10 MP.
Ooh, it accepts magic power easily just like Liza's spear. As expected of a

sword created by the dwarf master craftsman. It might also because of the ability of mithril.

Ripple-like green patterns appears on the surface of the sword. Seems that it's a characteristic of weapons made from mithril. When I put more magic power, it begins to leak out red light like Liza's magic spear.

It'd be bad if it break if I put too much magic power, so I stop at 50 MP. Mysteriously, the sword gets heavier as it accepts magic power. At the first 10 MP, I've thought that it's just my imagination, but now it's obviously heavier. We haven't drawn magic circuit during the sword's creation, I wonder if this is a characteristic of mithril?
I've had doubt whether the great hammer could be smaller if it's made from mithril instead, but later I'm told that the magic power from mithril-made hammer could adversely affect the mithril of the weapon that's currently being made.

"Umu, you have good skill. Let's have a bout for a bit."

Elder Dohar says so while taking a battle-axe and readies himself. My crisis perception kicks in as soon as I see the battle-axe.
No wait, that's a cursed weapon right? I could see a nasty red aura on it you know?

>[Ghost Vision Skill Acquired]

Uwah, don't need it. I don't want to learn it at all now.
Although I've seen real undead several times already, putting aside monsters, please spare me the evil spirit kind.
Horror is a no no.

In the end, I'm made to exchange blows with elder Dohar until he's satisfied while my thought is in another place like that.

Still, Dwarves are tough indeed. After pulling an all-nighter doing blacksmith, he's fighting for half an hour on top of it. Moreover, even though elder Dohar shouldn't have eaten breakfast yet, he's still energetic.

Even though I'm devoting myself to avoid his attacks as much as possible,

he succeeds in seeing through it and grazes me several times. Even though I'm faster than him, I'm gradually running out of place to run to, just like a chess game, it's a curious experience. As expected of a veteran of many battles. Having a lot of real combat experience is amazing after all.

◇

Dohar-san hands his battle-axe to his disciple, Zajir-san, and walks toward me. He's not running out of breath even after moving that much, as expected.

"Show me the sword."

I give the sword to Dohar-san, and then after checking the blade for any chips, he swings it to confirm something.

"Nice arm. There's no chips, and the sword isn't distorted too."

Is he praising himself?　I've thought that, but it seems that he's praising my sword skill instead.
I've tried to move as much as not to have my high skill level known, but he might've seen through it.

"You must've been training on sword since you're small. I don't intend to pry, but you don't look your age. One couldn't be that skillful before having at least 10 to 20 years of experience."

My age certainly doesn't match my appearance.

After elder Dohar stares at the sword he holds with both hands in silence, he begins to chant as if determined in something.

"Umu, ■■ Name Order.『Fairy Sword Trazayuya』."

That was dangerous, I almost let it slipped on my face. Poker Face is a really useful skill.
Is it fine to give that boorish straight sword, a name like 'fairy sword'?

Mithril is also called fairy silver, so maybe he takes it from there.

"Is Dohar-sama familiar with Trazayuya-shi?"
"Umu, yer' know it too huh. It's an old story, but I've served the Sage-sama for a long time. This is the best sword I've made in my life, I've named it after the late Sage-sama just now."

It's not like he's shedding tears, but elder Dohar closes his eyes and falls silent.
After opening his eyes, he sticks out the sword to me in silence, and having taken by the momentum, I receive it.

"It's a sword formed by yer' cooperation. With your skill, that sword would probably consent too. Use it well."

Wait a minute, the market price shows [--]. The stronger magic swords also have [--] market price, so this one is about equal huh. This should be worth several hundreds gold coins, or maybe even more than a thousand.... As expected of the work of the master among dwarves.

After I receive it, Dohar-san lets out an awfully good smile and shouts.

"Today is a good day! We're drinking it off! Bring out all the barrels!"

◇

And then, the drinking banquet happen just like that.

The place remains as the one where I've had a bout with elder Dohar for half an hour.
There, the dwarven women are bringing large quantities of grilled slices of meat, dried nuts and fruits, and fish variants that are good to have with liquor.
Not losing to them, the dwarven men are bringing out large amount of liquor barrels. Half of it are ales, and the other half are distilled liquor it seems.

Jojori-san pours me drink while I'm sitting beside elder Dohar. The strong drink poured into the silver cup is a transparent liquor with faint reddish tinge, and seems to be quite strong when I tasted it on the edge of my mouth. In turn, it tastes quite nice, so it's easy to drink. It tastes like the Awamori that I've drunk in Okinawa long ago.

"Guhahahaha, you sure can drink."
"Drinking it raw straight even though you're young, this guy has a promising future."
"The human that look like master swordsman from before magnificently choked on it."

The dwarves from the blacksmith room earlier are gathered around elder Dohar. Unlike when they're blacksmithing, everyone is a good-natured person.

Unfortunately, I don't know if it's because of my status or level, I can't get drunk. After I drink, I feel like getting drunk for a bit, but then I sober up very quickly. It's hard to become so even after I discard the effect from poison resistance.

>[Alcohol Resistance Skill Acquired]

I don't want to activate this skill.

Liza and the others are invited to the banquet too.
Since it's been a day, at first I want to spoil Pochi and Tama, but it's only until we get to the table on the corner of the room filled with smoked and grilled meat from unusual monsters.
Nana and Mia are drinking fruit water on my sides. Mia is biting variety of nuts while leaning on me. She looks cute like a small animal. Lulu is unusually eating meat around lead by Arisa.

The dwarven craftsmen's conversation begin to liven up. Although, since the topics are about blacksmith or mines, I mainly take the listener's role. It seems that they employ gnome magicians to deal with cave-in or gases, but when they're not accompanied by one, they use scrolls. It's expensive, but it's nothing compared to their lives they say.
That kind of scrolls aren't sold on the magic shop above the ground, but on

the magic shop at the entrance to the dwarf mine district. I'm taught the place to buy earth and wind magic. If they're selling it, I will definitely buy it.

◇

I had considered not to let Liza and the others drink, but since the dwarven old men insisted on letting them drank since it looked fun, I couldn't stop it.

"Ehehehe~ Satou. Fufuh~n Sa-Tou. Ahaha~, Satou♪"

Lulu is fully acting like a spoiled child, probably because she's taken off her sober face.
She looks like a merry drinker. When I take the cup from Lulu, she hugs me and begins to cuddle.

"Sniff, a person like me, it's alright to protect the membrane forever. I'll end alone in this world too."

Arisa is a downer, or rather, a maudlin drinker. I keep in mind as to not let Arisa drinks liquor.

『Kusukusu, it's fun, this is fun. Now Satou, go drink more. Ufufu, there are three of you, it's wonderful.』

Who the heck are you.

The always taciturn Mia talks furiously in elf language. It's a bit surprising. It's fine that she's spinning around while looking so happy, but her skirt is going loose so I should stop her soon.

"Nihehe~ mas tar sa ara roresu."
"Nyuru~n."

Pochi's tongue isn't functioning well.
Tama curls up on my lap as if slipping and starts sleeping. When Pochi looks at it, she also gets on it.

Ah, she's already sleeping.

"Master, the condition of my logic circuit is unusual. This water has poison possibly, possibly, possibly?"

Dang, even Nana drank huh. She has become able to eat a bit of food since a week ago. I make Nana who's become like a broken record to drink a magic potion effective for hangover and put her to sleep.

Liza who has been drinking quietly beside me sleeps in sitting position.

I won't let these girls drink next time.
While I'm having such determination, the drinking festival continues late into the night.

>Title [Blacksmith of the Fairy Sword] Acquired.
>Title [Hard Drinker] Acquired
>Title [Heavy Drinker] Acquired
>Title [Heavyweight Drinker] Acquired
>Title [Friends of Dwarves] Acquired

7-5. At the Hometown of the Dwarves (4)

Satou's here. Turmerics are amazing. When I had to drink and got hangover after getting dragged to corporate parties, I always drank it.

◇

On the next morning, three little girls and one girl are suffering from hangovers.

"Kuah, my head hurts. Uuh, it's blurry."
"Nyuu~."
"Ouch.....Nodesu."
"Satou, medicine."

Of course, Nana who has drunk medicine yesterday is fine, but even Liza and Lulu are alright too.
Lulu is handing water for everyone. When my eyes meet with Lulu, she turns red and looks down. I am not so uncouth as to quip shameful sight of a drunken person, but since it's cute, I'll leave her like that.

I make everyone drinks the same potion that Nana has drunk.
The effect of the potion is splendid, everyone who has been groaning since a while ago quickly gets back to their usual self and begins saying that they're hungry. I better not ask if they remember about yesterday. Particularly Arisa and Mia.

Since Jojori-san has come for us, we're going to the dining room. Come to think of it, even though elder Dohar and Jojori-san are the ruling family of this town, they're eating in the same room as the craftsmen and the blacksmiths. I wonder if dwarves see themselves as family?
Elder Dohar in the dinning room has already decided to have a drink in the morning. The meat in front of him is the same one we've eaten yesterday, the basilisk meat. It does taste good, but the smell is too strong and I can't exactly say that I like the flavor. I prefer something a bit more plain.

He's only noticed that Mia who has taken off her hood for the meal is an elf. It seems that I'm narrow minded with my worry, dwarves and elves don't have bad relationship.

"Hoo, the girl of Bornean forest eh. I've heard that you're missing, but you're actually eloping with a human huh?"
"Nn. Mutual love."

Don't say that scandalous thing. It's unfounded.

"I've saved her from a bad magician, and she's going to tag along until the forest."
"Mwuu."

It seems she's dissatisfied with the mutual love declaration being torn off.

"Since we've got request to search her from Bornean Forest's Senate, do you mind if we send them letter to report this?"
"Yes, I'm sorry troubling you."

Driar-shi, the mayor, arranges the letter instead of elder Dohar.
The worker's guild manager in Seryuu city should have sent a letter, but since, there's no guarantee that the letter will arrive, unlike the post office's registered mail, there's probably no problem even if there are many of them.

◇

I'm bringing everyone to go on a sightseeing tour of Bollhart city today, since yesterday I've left them unattended. They've already replenished the consumables yesterday. As expected.
Looks like Jojori-san has deliberately voluntereed to guide the sightseeing. It feels like we're VIPs.

First, we're going to the magic shop I'm taught yesterday.

"I'm sorry Satou-sama. I can't take people who don't have permissions from grandfather to the magic shop before the mine. There's no problem with Satou-sama, but I have to ask the other honored guests to wait here."

We're going on a tour together! Or so I've thought but it's already running aground.
Things won't change even if I trouble Jojori-san, so I decide to ask everyone to wait here and finish my business quickly.

The magic shop, Don-Haan, is beyond the passage after the open-space above the furnace for mithril-making yesterday. I see, I can understand why it needs elder Dohar's permission if it's here.
Per Jojori-san's request, I put the fairy sword we've made yesterday on my waist. I've made the sword belt myself from when I'm making something for Nana back then. The sheath has been made in hurry, literally before the breakfast today. It's a plain simple sheath with wood as the base. I'm thinking of making more proper sheath some other day.

"Yo, Jojori, have you fallen for a human? Zajir will cry y'know."
"Oi, Jojori, what are you doing bringing a human here. Oya-san will knock you out y'know?"

Twin small old men greet us inside the magic shop. They're gnomes, not dwarves.

"Hello, old man Don, and old man Haan. I've gotten permission from grandfather."

Jojori-san says so while pointing to the pommel of my fairy sword. Since the gnomes ask to look at it better, I take it off the sword belt and put it on easy-to-see place.

"This is, I'm surprised. If this isn't True Mark of Oya-san."
"Dang surprising. Did Oya-san make this as a joke after drinking too much?"

It seems that True Mark is like the signature of Dohar-san, and he doesn't usually put it on commonly made things. If I show this True Mark to the dwarves and gnomes of this self-governing dominion, I'd be treated like an old friend. Elder Dohar... you're too nice to a youngster you've just meet

yesterday.

For the time being, since I could buy anything in the shop thanks to the True Mark, I decide to see magic books and scrolls in this shop.
This is also an alchemy shop, but they're only selling finished products, and there's no compounding tools or materials for sale.

"Right eh, we have lower grade magic books for water, wind, ice and fire magic, while the intermediate grade magic books are for earth and fire. There are also unusual stuffs like blacksmith magic and mountain magic."

Don-san is piling up magic books.
This is the first time I've heard blacksmith magic, but it's just magic arranged for blacksmithing purpose, it looks like it's usable with fire magic skill. It's the same with mountain magic, it's just arrangement of magic for searching and digging out minerals in the mine, it seems to be usable with earth magic skill. I'm also advised that magic from other elements are necessary too, although there are only few.
I've bought the lower grade magic books from human towns, but since I see some unfamiliar spells in them, I buy them all. Since we can't carry it, it's decided to get it delivered along with their stock delivery.

"Hoo? Scrolls eh? We do have scrolls, but they're only expensive things for people who could use magic themselves, the effects are very light y'know?"

Haan-san takes the scrolls from the shelves here even while warning me like that. It seems that there are only six kinds of scrolls here.

"They're insurances for miner who's going solo to the mine. To crush rock so that it becomes sands, [Rock Smasher], for when water comes up [Freeze Water], and [Hard Clay], also, for reinforcing brittle bedrocks [Mud Wall (Wall)]. There are also [Air Cleaner], and [Air Curtain], for breaking through place with strange gas."

Of course, I tell him that I'll buy it all, but Don-san halts me.

"I'm sorry lad. I insist that you hold back on [Air Cleaner]. There's only one of that left. I want to keep it in stock until we restock next month."
"If it's like that, I'm fine with the other five."

It's regrettable, but it's not something I want at the expense of the dwarves. Moreover, it looks like the scrolls here are bought from the Toruma (Ossan)'s household, so I'll probably get it anyway when I get to the dukedom's capital.
The scrolls I've gotten are as follow.

>Scroll, Earth Magic: Rock Smasher
>Scroll, Earth Magic: Mud Wall (Wall)
>Scroll, Earth Magic: Hard Clay
>Scroll, Wind Magic: Air Curtain
>Scroll, Ice Magic: Freeze Water

◇

After finishing the purchase in the magic shop Don-Haan, I sally forth to the city with everyone.
At first, Pochi and Tama are dangling on both of my hands, but Mia and Arisa begin to complain. In the end, they've calmed down after they're alternating holding my hands in turns for each street, the turns are decided with rock-paper-scissor.

Oh?　Once we begin to walk, I notice that there are people following us. They're dwarves when I check on the map, or rather, they're people from Bollhart public order bureau. According to Jojori-san, they're bodyguards that Driar-shi has prepared. It's not 'feel like', but we 'are' treated as VIPs.

At the center of the square with water fountain, there are swordsman who's sword dancing, grinder shop, and people selling weapons openly.
The commodities are put on the sheet on the ground, unlike with stands like in Seryuu city. Although it's not like the displayed items are bad, they're also not especially good so I'm not interested.

There's a weaselman street vendor who's opening a play with target on the square. It seems that you have to hit a target 3 meter way with darts that look like shuriken. A session is one copper coin, and you'd get three pennies for each one of the five shurikens hit. It's the customers' victory if they hit

twice right, isn't that easy?

"How 'bout it bro. Would ye like to play?"

Since Pochi and Tama seem like they want to, I give him one copper coin.

"I'll hit with them all nodesu."

Pochi's first throw missed. It looks like the dart's balance is bad. No, seems that it's deliberately made to be unbalanced. Yet, she still hits twice, she does have throwing skill.

"I've hit twice nodesu!"
"Aiyaa, jou-chan is great really. I'd have to survive with rice if this keeps up."

I pat Pochi who looks pleased after she receives one copper coin and one penny. Her tail looks like it'd get torn off.

"Revenge for Pochi~?"

Everytime Tama throws the dart, the surrounding people cheer. She has hit it three times in a row.

"Oh, that little girl is besting the record."
"I'm betting for four hits."
"I'll bet that third will be the last."

They've begun betting, but Tama throws the fourth and fifth darts without minding the atmosphere.
Unfortunately, the fifth one misses, but she's amazing enough for hitting fours with darts made to miss.

"One missed."
"It's quite amazing already Tama."

She's wanted to hit with all the darts to the point that she forgets to ask for the prize. But, it seems that she pulls herself after I praise her. While she's rubbing her head on my hand after I've finished patting her, she

triumphantly shows the copper coins she's gotten on her hand to Pochi.

Since Tama shows her two copper coins and two pennies, Pochi's rivalry is burning and she's going to challenge the play again, but the weasel man doesn't accept re-challenge from people who have hit the target for twice or more.

Everyone else have also challenged it, but beside Mia who hit once, no one hit even once. Even though Liza occasionally does spear-throwing practice, she's missed it all. Jojori-san encourages me to to try it, but I refrain.

◇

There aren't only weapons, armors, and other savage things that are on display on this square, various handiworks made from gems or precious metal are also lined up. Although they look finer than the ones in Seryuu city, I feel like they look a bit rougher than the one I usually see on the TV's CM.

Since we're already here, I suggest on buying one silver worth of handiworks for everyone, but--

"The things that master makes are better anyway. Please put plenty of your love in it."
"Meat~?"
"That's right nano desu, I want grilled meat nodesu."
"Steak is nice, but I think that roasted meat on net is better."
"Crêpes."

Arisa is asking for accessory, but starting from Tama, Pochi, then Liza, and even Mia are making noises for food.
Nana and Lulu who are looking at the accessories agree with Arisa and tell me that my self-made accessories are better. I could do it easily due to production skills anyway, I'll make some matching earrings or bracelets I guess?

Maybe they're hungry because they're talking about food, I decide to have

meal on the restaurant that faces the square. Since I've been in the basement for a long time, I secure the seat on the open terrace in front of the restaurant. When we're ordering the meal, Pochi says a very curious thing, "I wish to quickly go on a journey and eat master's meat nodesu." Somehow everyone sympathizes with Pochi's remark and nods, Jojori-san is showing a confused face as the only one who doesn't understand the situation.
The meal is black bread with cheese and sausage garnishes, and it's normal for the dwarves to pour these with ale. The sausage is minced, so I put mustard on it. It's mustard after a long time, and when I check on Lulu, it seems that she's bought various type of sausages and mustard. GJ.

◇

"Why aren't you selling mithril sword even though here is dwarves' hometown!"

When we're drinking ginger tea after the meal, I could hear such yelling. When I glance there, a man who's wearing noble-like clothes is complaining to a dwarf who's selling weapons on the street stall.
It looks like the peace is ending and the disturbance at the dwarves' hometown seems to begin.

7-6. At the Hometown of the Dwarves (5)

Satou's here. There are a lot of clearance goods that appear during deflation, but even in parallel world, those goods also exist.

◇

"You've heard what I said from awhile ago right mister? Even among dwarf blacksmiths, the only ones who could work on first class stuff like mithril are the personal pupils of the old master. An ordinary working-class dwarf like me only makes sword from normal iron at best. I don't do mithril."

The dwarf man who has been pressed for an answer declares so while shrugging his shoulder as if spitting it out.

"That can't be.... Then where should I buy it. I've especially come here from Gururian city."
"I dunno such thing even if you ask me."

It seems that even the dwarves don't know how to deal with the man who's lamenting exaggeratedly.

"There's a lot of people like that during this season. With the month changing in 8 days, the once-in-three-years martial tournament will open in the capital, so people are coming here looking for mithril weapons."

After explaining it, Jojori-san says, "I'll go for a bit", and goes to quell the dispute. There are a lot of hidden bodyguards, so she should be alright.
If the tournament is next week then I don't think that he'd make it in time, but since the preliminary is held in every city of the dukedom, it looks like it'll be alright. Unfortunately, the preliminary isn't happening in Bollhart city.

The guy is the fourth son of the viscount, level 6, has sword skill. I don't think that he could do well in the tournament even if he has mithril sword.

"Gobler-san, what seems to be the problem?"
"Ah, Jojori sis. These people insist on buying mithril swords."
"What's this? Are you selling it?"
"I'm very sorry, but mithril weapons are made by reservations. Moreover, it requires letter of introductions from duke-sama and viceroy-sama."
"What... you say, the I won't be able to get mithril sword..."

The noble man mutters and collapses onto the ground--he's fainted. Judging from the states of his clothes and mantle, he's probably been through a long journey.

Jojori-san comes back while shouldering the man. As expected of a dwarf to easily carry a big grown man.
The cafeteria's caretaker comes out, and the man is laid on the bench at the corner of the cafeteria. She sure is kind, it'd be fine to leave him on the shade of the tree over there.

"Looks like he's overworked. Among second son of nobles and below and fallen nobles, there are a lot of case where they collapse after arriving here in strict schedule."

It has become a tradition huh?
However, even if he use a mithril sword, I think it'd still be hard though?

The one who answers that doubt isn't Jojori-san, but a woman dressed in armor who seems to be the attendant of the noble man earlier. She's a 16 years old blond woman with childish face. Her eyebrows are big. I don't know her proportion due to the armor, but it looks relatively good. Her level is 7, she has one-handed sword and shield skills. It looks like she serves the viscount house.

"I'm sorry for the trouble young master has caused. We'd like to get mithril swords no matter what, isn't there any way?"
"Even if you say that. If you bring the raw material, the mithril ingot, yourself, then there would be several people who could help, but since they're reserved for the duke and the viceroys beside that, it's impossible."

The woman warrior is more constructive than the noble man from earlier,

but Jojori-san's answer isn't favorable. By the way, the viceroys seem to be nobles who are governing cities beside the dukedom capital. It looks like the office's term ends in five years and the seat will be changed to a different person.
Still, if the system is so tied with reservations, I wonder if it's alright for me to receive such an excellent sword?
As the two's conversation is of no concern to me, I wipe Pochi's mouth which has gotten dirty from the meat soup, but the argument turns toward here.

"The personage there. I assume that your sword is made from mithril. It's an impudent wish, but would you be willing to hand it over?"
"I refuse."

She could know even without appraisal skill huh.
I've declined in a flash, but the woman warrior press on without giving up.
But, even if I'm selling it, I don't think that they could pay the compensation.

"You won't sell it no matter what?"
"In the first place, you wouldn't able to pay it anyway you know?"
"We'll pay no matter how much, if we can't, I'll give you anything you want."

Everyone glances at my face with that words from woman warrior. No, I'm not thinking something perverted you know.

"Even if you say no matter how much, a dagger sized mithril cost 40 gold coins you know? For a straight sword of this size, it'd be at least 120 gold coins."
"Wha, even though an iron sword only costs one gold coins, one hund, 120 you say?!"

I think that iron sword is more expensive though, but when I check on the woman's sword, just as I thought, it's of poor quality. Still, it's bad for her to try to buy something if she doesn't even understand market price.
I'll give her a warning once again to make her give up.

"Even if you get yourself a mithril sword, you won't suddenly get stronger you know. Rather than coming here to buy one, you should use that time and labor to hunt monsters instead."

"It is not so. For the sake of entering the imperial guard of the dukedom, the young master needs either a mithril sword or a magic sword."

I ask for the detail since I don't quite understand the relation. According to her story, it seems that the people who possess mithril swords or magic swords are able to pass the first preliminary round. And then, there's a story circulating among the young nobles that if you clear the "People who participate on the second preliminary round" condition, you'd get accepted into the dukedom's imperial guards.

It seems that entering into the imperial guards is the most popular course to be successful in life beside being the first child, so the noble man earlier has participated in the martial tournament since he's 15 but he's never passed over the first preliminary round. It'd be the third time he's entering this year.

To be frank, I don't really care since it's a stranger's problem.
Since Liza's spear is wrapped in cloth, it's fine, but it'd be troublesome if she notices that it's a magic spear.

Yet, Arisa who has just finished her meal repulses the woman who's persisting.

"You're being rude to our master even though he's being humble you know? This person is a respected noble with peerage, Chevalier Pendragon-sama."

After hearing that, the woman says, "I earnestly apologize for my rudeness.", and lowers her head while turning pale. What's this, I should have show her my peerage from the start. As expected of Arisa.

"Please be careful as there are a lot of frauds who are selling weapons made from monsters as though they're magic weapons recently."

Jojori-san advises the woman warrior.
I don't have obligation to keep them company forever so when Liza and the others have finished their meal, I give them sign to leave.
After we leave, some weasel men that looks like merchants approach the woman, but I decide to not care about it. It's her own responsibility if she gets scammed after ignoring Jojori-san's advice.

◇

The magic shop above the ground is managed by Jojori-san's childhood friend. The product line-up seem to be inferior compared to the underground shop, but since it's in the middle of the way to the waterwheel tourist attraction, I decide to visit it.

"Hey Jojori. That's unusual for you to come to this shop! Are you finally fed up with that muscle-brain idiot Zajir? That's good! That's really good."
"Hello Galhar. Please don't say such thing about Zajir-san."

Galhar-shi speaks like a machine-gun when he sees Jojori-san. Jojori-san lightly reproves that. Even though he's a dwarf, he's not exposing his stomach, and his beard is carefully set and waxed. Is he perhaps, a dwarf hunk?

Introduced by Jojori-san, I ask the magic shop to show me their magic books and scrolls, and although the magic books are mostly the same as the ones from underground magic shop, there are two books with different authors, so I buy them. The scrolls line-up is different, the ones here are suited for nobles and merchants.

"What do you think, I've deliberately stocked them from Daregan city. Aren't they unusual?"

He takes out some life magic scrolls.
They're insect repellent, anti-itch or deodorant, etc. Things that the wealthy would buy. There's even scroll for clean drinking unboiled water. Those scrolls are quite interesting, but I think the costs don't balance out.
Sure enough, when Jojori-san sees the line-up, her face becomes clouded.

"Hey, Galhar. How much are these scroll each?"
"Fufuhn, normally it would be 1 gold coin for one, but for you, I'm fine with giving it for 3 silver coins."
"These scrolls, perhaps they're not selling even one?"

Galhar-shi is boasting until his nose expands, but when he hears Jojori-san's words, his face freezes. Furthermore, Arisa delivers the decisive blow.

"That's right isn't it, rather than carrying around such expensive scrolls, it'd be more convenient to just hire an attendant who can use life magic instead, it's more effective financially too."

So it seems they're bad stocks that aren't selling at all ever since they're stocked half a year ago. With the support from the girls, I buy them cheaper than their stocking prices. Coupled with three other well-selling scrolls, the total becomes three gold coins.

The scrolls that I've obtained are as follow.

>Scroll, Life Magic: Bug Wiper
>Scroll, Life Magic: Anti-Itch
>Scroll, Life Magic: Deodorant
>Scroll, Life Magic: Pure Water
>Scroll, Nature Magic: Short Stun
>Scroll, Nature Magic: Sonar
>Scroll, Nature Magic: Fence

Beside Short Stun, they're all questionable magic, but I've bought them all since my collector's soul grows excited.
Galhar-shi brings more bad stocks from the back since he seems to have judged that I'd buy them. Looks like he's bought them from a weasel merchant at the neighboring city called Daregan.

"How about it? They're quite rare y'know."

They're certainly rare, maybe.

The first is [Nature Magic: Signal] which Nana also has, but it's useless since there's no one who could receive it. It's probably usable as beacon.

The second is [Nature Magic: Cube]. This is like a magic in between [Shield], and [Floating Board], the practitioner could create cubes of arbitrary size that float in the air.
It's mainly used to keep off rushing enemies, but it could also be used like a

chair. On top of having short effective time, it would also disappear when it's separated away from the practitioner. It's not like it's completely still in the air as it'd move when it's overloaded. Looks like I could use it to create invisible stairs in the air.

I wonder if it's an unexpectedly usable magic?

"The lowest level cube is about this much see?"

Arisa creates a floating cube of about 10 centimeters wide in the air. Moreover, it seems that it could only hold 500 grams of weight. In case of scroll, since it could only invokes magic of the lowest magic, I understand why it becomes a bad stock.

The third is [Fire Magic: Furnace Flame]. It seems to be a magic for melting ores into ingots. It's actually a very dwarf-like scroll, but it couldn't even be used for melting iron core if there are less than 10 scrolls, it also needs strong vessel to use, and the melted iron will flow to the ground, so it's difficult.
Furthermore, the activation range is short, so the practitioner would get burnt, it's a defective product.
In short, it's better to just use normal furnace. Since there's no meaning for its own blacksmithing purpose, there's no demand for it at all. He's only noticed it after he's bought it.

"How did you end up with all these weird scrolls..."

Arisa and Mia looks amazed. Pochi and Tama are sleeping beside Liza's feet. They're tired after all huh.

"Y, you can use it as attack magic."
"If you attack with this, you'd only hurt yourself. Something like fire bullet is more efficient."

So it seems.

The last one is [Light Magic: Condense]. Galhar-shi desperately tries to sell it by saying things like you could use it for drying laundry during cloudy days, or you could use it to read in dim room. I'm told that he's mistaken it

for [Luminescence(light)].

He seems to have thought that I would not buy it since it's been thoroughly disapproved by Arisa and the others, so he looks really dumbfounded when I begin negotiating.
Certainly, normally one would think that they're nothing but trashes, but as for me, I think that they look more attractive than the scrolls from the underground shop. With the help from Arisa and Jojori-san, I buy them all for dirt cheap one silver coin, far from even half the prices.

It was a good shopping.
I'm keeping in mind to sell him scrolls for cheap when I've become able to create scrolls my own someday.

◇

The great waterwheel that Jojori-san has lead us to is smaller than I've thought, but I'm glad that it looks like a tourist attraction.
Even though we've just eaten so much just now, everyone heads to the sweets stalls instead of the waterwheel. The stalls are selling famous specialty pastry around here in style of prawn chips. It seems that they're in promotion.

"Master, aan nano desu."

I get one baked sweet that Pochi is presenting to me. Arisa and the others who are queuing in front of the stalls are clamoring, but I taste the sweet without minding it. The taste and smell are like prawn chips.

While tasting that nostalgic flavor, we go around visiting blacksmiths from various tribes, starting from the dwarves, on the craftsman district, and then we go back to the guest mansion.

Evening of that day, losing to the pleading gazes of Pochi and Tama, I decide to stand in the kitchen. The dining room aunty who gives me permission turns out to be the wife elder Dohar. I've brought 20 type of meat from the wagon as ingredients, but it's not enough at all in the end. I've prepared

many large plates, but after the dwarven blacksmiths are coming after getting enticed by the smell, the dining room becomes battlefield. The line of sights from Pochi, Tama and the dwarves who are seriously competing for the meat that look at me when I'm refilling the platters are scary. Jojori-san is unable to remain indifferent to this, so she divides the children from the adults, but since the dwarf children have also come for the meat, the contest hasn't ended. Since friendships seem to be budding from the meat contest, I let it slide.

It wasn't until late in the night that Lulu, Nana, and me who have been refilling the meal were able to have meal ourselves.

7-7. Scrolls and Cheat

Satou's here. I'm reminded of Icarus when we're talking about flying human, but flying in the air has been everybody's dream since the olden days. In this world, people aren't flying with wax wings, but with magic.

◇

I'm told that the granddaughter of elder Dohar will be my wife if I stay, so I promise Zajir-san who glares at me when he hears that to part away, thus we leave Bollhart city behind.

The nearest city is four days away.
Since the path there is a mountain trail, it'll probably be five days.

There are several carriages going to the same direction as us, but since our speeds are different, we're not moving in caravan. It seems that normally, even if the moving speeds are different, many carriages join together to evade thieves, monsters and beasts.

Since we wouldn't be able to craft, experiment and do training if we're together with other merchants, I try not to intrude each other's turf as much as possible.
Even so, there are times when we meet them during the break, so I've put dummy barrels, boxes and various luggage around.

Currently, the coachman is Lulu. Arisa has installed a cushion on the driver's seat during our stay in the Bollhart city, so it looks comfortable now. It seems that the inside of the cushion seat contains coiled springs that she's asked the blacksmiths to make.

◇

Two days after we've left Bollhart city, the caravan of merchants aren't near our camping ground at last, so I decide to use the many scrolls that I've bought.

Before I use the scrolls, I finally activate the five kind of magic skills; Earth, Fire, Wind, Ice, and Light.

First I make a wall made from mud with [Mud Wall (Wall)]. It's a one meter tall, one meter wide, and five centimeters thick [Wall]. It looks like it'll collapse if it's just touched lightly.

Lulu and the others who are watching give an applause. Tama wants to climb it, but I warn her that it's fragile so she shouldn't.

Next, I harden the mud wall with [Hard Clay]. It's not glossy like a porcelain, but it's strengthened enough.

It seems that both the mud wall and the hardened wall would not return back to their original forms even with passing time. If I have a potter's wheel, I would be able to make pot for medicines. Come to think of it, I don't have Ceramic making skill yet, let's try it next time.

When I use [Rock Smasher] on the mud wall and the hardened mud wall, both of them break and become sand.

When I use [Freeze Water] on the water in the bucket, it freezes for three centimeters from the surface. Since it's winter now, it doesn't seem like it'd melt even if it's left alone. If I use it on a pond if we find one, we would be able to play on a skating ring made from it. I'll make skate boots while we're moving.

The [Air Curtain] could be used to make windbreak, but the effect disappear in about three minutes.

Since all the life magic I've tried have subtle effects, I'm omitting it.
[Deodorant] seems to be usable for when I've moved my body like after training.
It's quite unpopular when I use it later. I've already expected the kind of

Arisa's reaction, "Boy's sweats are proof of youth you know, and you're erasing that! erasing that!", but even Lulu looks really disappointed. When we're sleeping, even Pochi and Tama say, "There's no master's scent nodesu.", they rub their noses while putting on strange faces, so I decide not to use it except when I'm really stinky of sweats.

Next I try using [Condense]. It condenses the moonlight and it does get a bit brighter, but that's it. The magic tool Light Drop that hasn't had role recently is much brighter. No wonder it becomes a bad stock.

I use the other bad stock [Furnace Flame (Forge)] from a place away from everyone. I ask Mia to standby with a long stick for if the fire spread. I change into cheap shirt and trousers since I don't want my clothes get burned. Arisa is saying some stupid things from behind, "Shirt is way better than robe isn't it. That slender body line is irresistible."

I put a copper dagger I've got from the thieves back then on a rock and use the magic. The MP consumption is slightly bigger, maybe because this spell belong to intermediate class. Since the flame appears only one meter away from the scroll, I move it to the dagger's place in a hurry. Even though the copper dagger should have been more soluble than iron, it only gets hot and isn't melting. Since the nearby weeds are burning, I ask Mia to put down the fire.

I'll try the remaining nature magic. I use [Signal] to send Morse codes to Nana. I ask Nana to activate [Signal] too so that she can receives it.

"It's ton ton ton, tsu, tsu, tsu, ton ton ton."
"Then, try to send the same thing back."
"Yes, master."

A signal sound from one scene of the movie I've seen a long time ago is playing back in my head.
Arisa who's seemingly bored begins to sing [SOS] song while doing strange choreography. I wonder if that's from olden idol? Since the song is upbeat, Pochi and Tama have also begun to dance together. Even Mia is accompanying the music with reed flute.

No well, you girls, you don't have to force yourself to watch, if you're tired

it's fine to do as you like you know?

I pull myself together and use [Sonar]. It's searching for enemies in 20 meters wide range. It seems that it doesn't detect small animals, and only targets dangerous ones like poisonous snakes and stray dogs. The effect only last for five minutes. I know now just how irregular the radar is.

I try the remaining ones in turns. [Fence] creates transparent horse-rail-like fences that's one meter tall and one meter wide. However, it's quite fragile, it partially breaks from [Short Stun], and completely breaks when Liza lightly kicks it.
It might be usable if the opponent is just some low level thieves, but if it's a knight-class, then it would get broken without any resistance.
The last one I use is [Cube], and it's just like how Arisa has demonstrated, the activated cube is not more than 10 centimeters in size.

◇

It's the real thing now.

So that Liza and the others don't get hurt, I move two mountains away from them. Unlike from before I announce that I'm high leveled where they'd get worried if I go alone in uninhabited place, they don't object at all now. However, when we're in place with people, there's always someone beside me at midnight, perhaps they're thinking that I'd go to have some night time. Good grief, it's no good. I've felt that my sexual desire has decreased sharply after I arrive at this world, but I'm still a healthy man. I'd like to have a nightlife once in a while.

My destination is a place with five monsters called Soldier Beetles. They're drone beetle-like monsters with the size of light cars, their level are lower 20s.

When I'm two kilometers away from it, I activate [Sonar] and go closer. It seems that the range of enemy search is around one kilometer. I think it's because the skill level is 10, it's quite different from the initial one.
However, since I have radar already, it's regretful to think that I'd never use

this magic. The effective time has been quite extended too.
Above all, judging from the name, it'd be bad if an enemy with good sense notice me when I'm searching using this. In truth I could sense radar-like wave of magic from [Sonar] when I'm using [Signal] magic. On the contrary, I think it could be usable for fake warning.

Since I've got to the place 500 meters away from the monsters, I shoot [Short Stun] to check its effective range. Just like Magic Arrow, the possible shot amount has increased. The amount is the same as magic arrow it seems. I shoot one to one of the beetle. The remaining 120 go towards the other three. I divide it to 20, 40, and 64.
As the result, the beetle shot with one is fainted with dented shell, but the one shot with 20 gets its shell crushed and is half-dead. The beetles shot with 40 and more have been completely smashed.

It's disqualified as a magic for making thing faints.

It'd be fine if the opponent are knights or heavy infantries, but if it's civilians, they'd surely die. I'll analyze this spell, and I'll make one that won't increase in strength with skill level and status. The time limit is until I get to Toruma (Ossan)'s household to make scrolls. It's been awhile since I've got a work with delivery date, it's tensing me up.

Strangely, the only safe monster is coming toward here. Is it not running because its intelligence is low, or is it trying to revenge its friends.

Since it's vigorously flying here, I try to use [Mud Wall (Wall)]
I use it at maximum power, and a gigantic wall of 300 meters wide, 20 meters high, and 5 meters thick wall appears.
Since I create it just before the beetle, it hits the wall splendidly. I've thought that it would pierce through the wall, but seems that the wall is surprisingly hard, and the monster is stuck on the other side of the wall.

--Looks like I could build a castle overnight.

Since it'd only obstruct me if I leave it alone, I destroy it with [Rock Smasher]. The mud wall becomes fine sands and collapses. Since it looks like I'd get swallowed in it, I quickly jump onto a nearby tree and get out of the trouble.

Once again, I make [Mud Wall], and cancel it, it returns to the similar state as the original. As expected, the destroyed woods and undergrowth aren't restored.

The fainted monster finally recovers after 30 minutes, and it's going here. Since it's firing fire bullet even though it's just an insect, I take it with [Air Curtain]. Even though it's taking the fire bullet directly, the fire bullet is not piercing through and gets scattered away in front of the wind wall. It seems to be usable as defense if the opponents are just small fries.

The insect seems to have given up on fire bullet and begins to ram here, I'll put up [Cube] to stop it. Looks like I could create 300 meters cube at most, but the limitation is that I can't create one if there's something inside it. I make a cube of about 10 meters big in front of the beetle. The beetle can't break through the cube, just like with the mud wall. It loses its momentum and stops after pushing the cube for about 20 meters. The beetle stalls and begins falling, but by flapping its wings, it lands near me and runs on the ground attacking me.

Just as expected.

I make [Fence] in front of the beetle that's attacking on the ground. It looks like I could create multiple ones with this too, but since I could only create five spatially, I create five of it.
The fence seems to be fixed on the ground, and it won't move as long as it's not destroyed. The beetle which is moving at 30-40 Km/H is skewered by one of the fence and dies, but there's no trace of the fence moving. Since the fences could be canceled individually, I remove the unused ones and leave one alone. I leave it to confirm the effective time.

I put one complete corpse of the beetle into the Storage, and only collect the shells and the cores of the rest.

The dying one becomes a sacrifice for [Condense]. It seems that the focus power is increased with skill level, the condensed moonlight becomes laser-like. Unfortunately since the original light for the amplified one is weak, the power isn't that strong. It's about as powerful as one Remote Arrow. Furthermore, the effect only materialize after five minutes, so I think it's only usable during daytime as point attack. If it collects sunlight, the power

will surely increase. Since it somehow feels cruel to keep doing this, I end it with Remote Arrow.

Continuing on, it's time to experiment with [Furnace Flame (Forge)].

I've thought of making furnace with [Mud Wall] reinforced with [Hard Clay], but I decide to use [Cube] instead.

I create transparent furnace by using several [Cubes]. It looks like the cube is reinforced if they're connected. Even though I could erase [Cube] blocks that has been connected whole, I could not separate them once connected so I have to be careful.

And then I put copper and iron daggers inside the transparent furnace made from Cubes, and activate [Furnace Flame (Forge)]. Three minutes after activation, the copper dagger melts, and in five minutes, the iron dagger also becomes liquid. It seems that [Cube] is about as durable as [Shield], it could withstand [Furnace Flame (Forge)] for 30 minutes before breaking. I found out that I could extend the endurance time to 50 minutes by creating two Cubes layered.

I open the menu and narrow the search on the map. I search for places where there are metal veins on the mountain nearby. There are veins for metal called [Iron Stone] and [Uutz Steel] it seems. I mark them, including the copper vein.

The former is approximately 30 meters away from the ground surface, so I expose it by skillfully using [Mud Wall (Wall)]. The rest of the work is done by adjusting the power of [Rock Smasher] to cut the ores. I've thought of using the sharper holy sword for an moment, but I decide to use [Rock Smasher] as a training for using magic.

Then I put the iron ore inside the transparent cube-made furnace, activate [Furnace Flame (Forge)], and begin the refining process. At first, I fail at the adjustment and the finished product is unusable, but by the third time, I'm able to refine normally. The light is dazzling, but thanks to Light Adjustment skill, it doesn't become a problem. Even while being discouraged by the small quantity of ingots refined from large quantity of ores, I continue the work.

Since Uutz Steel would darken and become brittle if I go too far, I have a hard time in adjusting the heat level for refining. I might've not been able to refine it if I don't know the accurate temperature from AR.
Thanks to the complex refinery from before, the copper one is easy.

I've thought that my magic power would be exhausted halfway, but maybe thanks to the quick MP recovery rate, it isn't even depleted by half. I've made 100KG iron ingots, 20KG Uutz steel ingots, and 70KG copper ingots before the sky turns white. The copper ingots alone worths 200 gold coins huh. Magic is tremendous after all.

I take out an anvil from the Storage, and try to create an iron sword using the same process of creating the fairy sword, but I'm only able to make a brittle sword. It's not like it could not receive magic power, but it's cracked even before I put 10 points on it. So the process is for mithril after all.

Let's try to look for mithril veins when we're moving.

>Title [Magic Blacksmith] is Acquired

◇

I'm going back by strolling on the sky by using Cubes as footholds. I've changed into Silver Mask since I don't know if anyone's watching.

At first I make cubes in the shape of stairs to play around with, but since it's fun to walk on the air, I try to see how far I can go up while shouting, "I can fly". I'm unusually in high tension if I do say so myself.

I keep making footholds as I jump from them, and I'm become able to see the morning sun on the horizon. I could see a white line leading up to the sky at the southeast direction, I wonder what's that? Judging from the map, it's on the direction of Bornean forest. Well, I will probably know about it in time.

Since it's become hard to breath, I try to see below, and my back grows cold.

Huh? Did I get too carried away?
According to the AR, the altitude is about 4 kilometers. Even I would probably die if I fall from this height. I must be careful not to run out of magic power.
Even though I'm at this altitude, I unexpectedly don't feel fear, since the stratosphere should be about 10 kilometers high, there's no worry of jumping out to the space yet.

For approximately 10 minutes, I practice fighting in the sky. 3D Maneuver, and Space Grasp are doing nice jobs. I've become able to understand the minimum [Cube] size needed too.

I feel like I could fight dragons or demons in the air if it's like this.
There's a hawk with five meter wing-span near the mountain, so I try practicing air battle with it during my way back. If I have wings to glide through air, there would be more usable tactics.

>[Sky Drive Skill Acquired]

Sky Drive is a skill with similar effect as using [Cube] as footholds to fly in the air, it uses less magic power. I would be able to have midnight stroll easier with this. Since the only one who could endure the wind pressure and decompression is me, it's too bad that I can't invite Arisa and the others to have some air night strolls. I think there's a wind magic called [Windbreak (Canopy)], I'll request it from Ossan's household when I'm getting scrolls from them.

>Title [One who Flies without Wings] Acquired

7-8. Wolves and Stalker Reserves

Satou's here. Isn't it unexpectedly recently that the word 'stalker' become popular? It'd have been fine if the earnest person isn't troubling other people...

◇

"Master, it seems that the road is split at the foot of the mountain ahead. Which way should we go?"

Having been called by Lulu from the coachman's seat, I stop the experiment.

"Nice, Lulu! Now now, you must go quickly!"
"Flirting, end."

Arisa pushes my back to hurry me go the coachman's seat. I leave Tama who's sleeping on my lap to Mia. Pochi is sleeping on Nana's lap. Very enviable, I wonder if she'd let me take her place if I give her meat during meal.

I thought Mia's line was a false accusation, Nana and me were only facing each other for experiment, we were not flirting.

I was only trying to check the limit of [Signal] magic; whether we could receive signal from [Signal] magic if there was no receiver, so Nana and me were sitting face-to-face with each other.

In addition, since I wasn't allowed to stare at Nana's breasts, I looked at her face, but they were still saying bad things.

"Really, on top of gazing each other, you two were even locking hands, really!"
"Guilty."

My [Magic Perception] skill immediately kicked in, but Nana couldn't receive the signal, so I was to tap Nana's palm with my finger whenever I was sending a signal.

It's purely an experiment.
There's nothing shameful--I've thought of the little perk, but it's a secret.

To change the subject, I go to the coachman's seat and give instruction to Lulu.
From the mountain trail we are on now, I could see the road extending at the direction of the forest. The road that extends beyond the forest leads to Daregan city. I could even faintly see something that looks like the outer wall beyond the forest from here.

"Turn left there, don't go straight."
"Yes, I understand."
"Huh? Haven't I said that Daregan city is straight ahead? I've already told you to board on a ship there to get straight to the dukedom's capital."

That was plan, but it'd be bad if we went to the city ahead.

"We're going to encounter the stalker reserves if we keep going."
"Geh, don't tell me, it's Oppai-san?"
"W, wait Arisa. For the time being, she's the daughter of master's master, call her Karina-sama properly."

Lulu gives a warning, but since Lulu herself has added, "For the time being", I understand Lulu's assessment about her.
Karina-sama and three bodyguards-like maids who are traveling together with her are in the Daregan city ahead. Looks like it's impossible for knight Zotor or junior knight Hauto to go with her after all. Even lady Karina should have had many jobs like suppressing thieves in her own territory. She's a pain in the ass.

"Karina~?"
"Now, it's time to have a match nano desu!"

Pochi and Tama are gleefully jumping out to the coachman's seat. That

reminds me, these two love to have a match with lady Karina.

At first they were waging war with lady Karina to protect me since she looked like she was bullying me, but the three were somehow in the same wavelength and had good matches. It seemed that Lady Karina were reluctance in hitting the two, so it became a defensive match. One out of two matches, the two ran out of their stamina and lady Karina won. If it was not that then both sides ran out of stamina and it became a draw.

The two are looking around restlessly while saying, "Karina, not here~?", "Not here nodesu."
While we're having such idle talk, Liza who has gone ahead to scout the junction comes back. There is no thieves in our course today, so only Liza is riding a horse.

"Master, there's a group of human on the fork ahead, Since I could hear sounds of weapon clashing, they might be thieves."
"Thieves extermination~?"
"I'll do my best nodesu!"

Looks like lady Karina has disappeared from Pochi's and Tama's heads after they hear about the thieves.
We can't see them from here, but the people that Liza's found aren't thieves according to the map. There are several martial artists, and the rest are farmers, probably from the neighborhood.

◇

There's an open space on the crossroad. Two martial artist are exchanging sword blows on the center of the open space. Around 20 farmers are watching that battle from a distance.
It appears that it's a betting game, the farmers are having heated discussion in excitement.

There are several carts parked on the open space. Since they're empty, the people here are probably going back after delivering goods to Daregan city.

Pochi and Tama want to participate, but since the martial artists here are only level 4-7, they're too weak for them, so I forbid it.

Pochi and Tama are demanding persistently on my sides, but they'd only bully the weak here if I give in here, so I endure it. The two don't seem to be giving up, but Liza who gets down from the horse lifts them up in both hands.
Pochi who rarely sulks is posing like a corpse listlessly while being carried by Liza. It's been awhile since I've seen the Dara～n pose. Tama who's still resisting Liza looks as if remembering something after she sees Pochi, and takes the same pose.

Now then, the opponents for Pochi and the others aren't them.
There are three people heading here from the forest chased by wolf packs reflected on the radar. Things would become quite horrible if those wolf packs rush to where the farmer crowd is. I could exterminate them with Remote Arrow, but I'll have them become sacrifices for Pochi's and the others' fighting spirit.

I park the wagon on one corner of the open space, and bring only the three beastkin girls near the place the wolves will come out.
Pochi's ears are twitching. Apparently she has detected the wolves' presences.

"Master, wolves nano desu!"
"Nyu～? there is?"

It seems Tama and Liza still haven't heard them. Liza is glancing here, so I nod.

"Bro, some strong looking guards you have there. Would you like to compete?　You'll only get some injuries even if you lose, but you'll get one big copper coin if you win. It's not a bad deal right?"
"No, this girl is saying that there's something strange in the woods."
"That so?"

A man who looks to be the gambling manager greets me, but I only answer him vainly. They're already under 200 meters away.
The manager seems to have heard the wolves sound too, he gives sign to the

farmers to move away. The manager is talking about something to five people who seem to be martial artist.
Let's settle it before they join.

I chant dummy spell to activate [Fence], and put five transparent fences in places.

So that the mercenaries don't plunge to the fences, I stop them when they come out of the woods and roll them behind the fences.

"Run away! Wolf packs are coming."
"We will try to buy some time. So, quickly."

Two of the three thrown ones warn us, but it's unnecessary. I assure the three.

"It's alright. We'll quickly take care of it, so rest behind the fences."

Wolves that are chasing the mercenaries are coming out of the woods when I'm talking, but they get skewered by the fences one by one. With their daggers, Pochi and Tama easily deal with wolves that are somehow able to avoid it.
The wolves group that tries to circumvent the fences get pierced by Liza's spear. I could hear the mercenaries murmur, "Amazing", "Strong", but I ignore them.

I kick the jaw of the unfortunate wolf that have jumped over the fence while heading here. It bounces on the fence and flies to before Tama.

"Dangerous~?"
"Aah, sorry."

Tama quickly finish the wolves even while complaining. The three have defeated about 20 wolves in the blink of an eye. There are still three wolves in the woods, but since they escape to the depth, I don't chase them.

"Yer' amazing, pipsqueak!"
"The wolves were like puppies!"

At first the farmers are frightened by the wolves voices, but they've soon watched the battle it seems. Several of them are raising voices of praises.

"I'm not pipsqueak nodesu! Pochi nano desu!"
"Tama~ na no."

Liza is indifferently dismantling the wolves, but Pochi and Tama are taking victory poses while lifting the wolf with one hand together triumphantly. They immediately get scolded by Liza and go back to the dismantling.

The gambling manager and the five martial artists are escaping toward Daregan city. In a way, their actions are justified. Or rather, half of the farmers who haven't escaped are the weird ones.

◇

I leave the dismantling process to Liza and the others, and go to where the mercenaries are behind the transparent fences. All three of them are women. One of them is level 5 with dagger skill, but the rests are level 3 with no skills. Only one of the level 3 has serious injury.

"Are you alright?"
"Yes, thank you for your help."
"I'm sorry. We didn't think that there would be people here."

Certainly, if this is a game, i's like Train, or rather an MPK. Let's have them reflecting on it. I give them my honest opinion while giving emergency treatment to the girl with serious injury who doesn't have energy to talk with me.

"It would have become a catastrophe if these girls weren't here. I suggest to hunt in moderation."
"It's my fault. Since it was our first dispatch, we chase far into the forest and got counterattacked..."

A female mercenary who looks to be the leader makes an excuse. She's 18 as the oldest of the group, the other two are 15-16 years old. I'd like you to

learn to act carefully before you lose your life.
I've mostly completed the emergency treatment, but her stamina still keeps decreasing. I lift the girl and see her back, there are three claw marks. Like this, scars will remain. Even though her appearance is like a 10 years old, it's probably still harsh for a woman.
I've had no intention of using potion here, but it can't be helped. Even though the girl is losing consciousness because of the injury, I pour the potion on her mouth. Since I can feel criticizing gaze from behind, I restrain myself from doing mouth-to-mouth.

As the result of saving these girls at this time, I've given clues to troublesome people. I regretted that I didn't ask them to not speak about it, but I didn't regret saving them since forsaking them would leave bad taste on my conscience.

I decide to depart while leaving the girls who are surprised with the effect of the potion. We distribute half of the entrails from the dismantled wolves to the watching farmers and the mercenaries women. As expected, I can't exactly ignore the eyes full of expectation coupled with drools.

7-9. Karina and the Maid Squad

God is mean.

Even though the unpleasant male soldiers have disappeared, and it'd finally be comfortable, I have to accompany the young lady on a journey...
I dream of wearing that cute maid uniform again, but I endure it for now.

"Pina-san, Pina-san, Karina-sama has gone off, is it alright not to stop her?"

The subordinates are calling me who's deep in thought. As it turns out, the other maids who accompany the young lady with me are the problem children, Taruna and Erina, god is really mean.

I put off the grieving for later, and see at the direction Erina's finger points to, my face turns pale.

The young lady has been peeking on the cliff below since awhile ago, but then she jumps down it without hesitation.

"Y, young lady."

I rush up to the edge of the cliff in hurry, but it's probably too late now. Ah, how incompetent of me to not even able to stop the young lady's suicide. I'll be fired from my precious workplace too. I might be downgraded to be a slave. Considering the pampering baron-sama, he might even sentence me to decapitation out of grief. Ah, such misfortune.

"Pina-san, rather than indulging in your misfortune, you should look at that instead you know?"

Contrasting her calm outward appearance, the brash Taruna points on the foot of the cliff. Did the young lady perhaps only suffer from bone fracture and fall somewhere?

I brace myself and see under the cliff, the young lady is lively exterminating the thieves.

My neck is safe somehow.

◇

"Young lady, please don't do such thoughtless action--"
"My, I'm protecting populace from thieves, it's our duty desuwa."

As if covering over my scolding, the young lady pushes her ideal. This person really doesn't listen to other people. In the first place, this is the dukedom, the young lady doesn't have to act for the populace here, but she's said that it's trivial even when I point it out.

"I'm sorry Pina-dono. I had thought of stopping her, but several lives were depending on us. I'd like you to overlook this."

Voices of a gentleman talks for the young lady, it's the very mysterious talking magic tool, Raka-dono.
Although, I think the restraint for the young lady's recklessness is gone ever since she's got hold of this magic tool.

The ones she's saved are merchants party who are going to the Daregan city. Their guards have been killed by the thieves, but they themselves are only suffering from minor injuries. Since there are no one who's dying, let's let them tend to their own injuries.

Taruna and Erina are stripping equipments from the half-killed unconscious thieves. It's annoying, but I'll help them. The smells from leather armors make me want to pinch my nose, but since they can be sold for some money, we're taking them before dealing with the thieves. Unfortunately, their swords and spears that seem to be made of bronze have been destroyed. The young lady used her superhuman strength to destroy them, it'd had been more profitable if she cut their throats instead.

After I've finished stripping off their equipments, I dispose the thieves one by one. The thieves have lost their way, they're probably prepared to lose their life like this. I stab their hearts in one go to at least not make them suffer.

Taruna and Erina have finished dealing with theirs too.

We go back toward the merchant who is troubled with the young lady's talk about hero's tale. The ignorant young lady refuses the merchant-dono when he's going to give her rewards, "Such things like rewards aren't necessary desuwa", she says. Since I can't ask for rewards now, I have the merchant-dono to buy the equipments we've got from the thieves. He buys it at higher prices than the market's. It probably includes the reward.

Due to the merchant-dono's earnest request, we're going to escort them to Daregan city. It's a secret from the young lady, but I think escort's job is attractive. With this, we don't have to do things like renting barn for everyone but the young lady when we're staying at the inn in Daregan city. The traveling expense from Nina-sama is barely enough for a round trip to Daregan city. Considering the poor financial situation of the baron's territory, she could not give us more than this. If the head-maid hasn't given us one silver coin in secret, we might have had to hunt along the way.

Evening of that day, we're treated to the meal made by the merchant-dono's slave, but it's only cereals porridges. Moreover, 30% of it consist of brans. He doesn't seem to be a wealthy merchant. The young lady gives an impression, "What strange textures.", but I think it's a strong point of her that she would eat up food even if it's bad. She's been raised to be poor--er, economical since she's child in the honorable house.

I want to quickly arrive at Daregan city, and eat the popular fish dishes with relish.

◇

"Now then, young lady, is it alright for us to not greet the viceroy?"
"It's fine, I don't have dress for the greeting anyway. It's not good to go meet them looking like this right? Or, are we going to tailor a dress?"

The young lady's words are reasonable.
Even though the clothes that the young lady wears is nicely tailored, it's a soldier-like clothes, not something that a lady would wear.

We're barely able to pay hotel fees, there's no way we have money to make dress.

"Pina-san, we've already got an inn, so let's quickly eat some fish～."

The suggestion is so, the gluttonous, Erina-like. However, first we have to straighten the clothes of the young lady. Since she hasn't been able to bathe until here, I'll dust her off.

"Taruna, go ask the inn's caretaker to bring hot water. Erina, go to the port and ask if anyone's seen someone that resembles chevalier-sama. Taruna should also go get informations from the market after you've done arranging the hot water."

I give the reluctant two works. Since there's still some time until evening, I'll make them work until then.

I receive the hot water from the inn's caretaker, and wake up the young lady who's begun to doze off on the bed. I take off the young lady's remaining clothes and wipe her body with a clean cloth that's been soaked in the hot water. They are violently-sized breasts no matter how many time I see it. As I'm perfectly flat, I occasionally feel hateful on it.

"Okay, I feel refreshed now."

The young lady falls on the bed while muttering satisfyingly. She's probably tired from her first long journey. She's sleeping just like that, while not wearing even a piece of string.
I put her underwear and night-wear while being careful not to wake her up. I wash dirty laundry until the two come back.

◇

Even though I feel sorry to say that it's as expected, the two aren't able to get any clue about chevalier-sama.
If we still can't find any clue after searching for the whole day tomorrow, it'd probably be better to rely on Toruma-sama and head to the viscount

Shiimen house in the dukedom's capital.

"Yay, fish~♪"
"It's not something you can often eat in Muno city."

The dining room at the first floor of the inn is quite lively. Since our purses have got a bit swollen from the rewards as escort, we order famous set of fish meal. The two are innocently frolic, but as for me who isn't good with fish bones, I'm not that excited. It's finally here. I move the cut white meat to a different plate, and present it before the young lady. It should have been the work of the two, but if I leave it to the rash Erina and the thoughtless Taruna, the young lady will choke on fish bones.

"My, the salt works well, it's delicious desuwa. This rice? This strange texture matches well with the fish."

I'm glad that it suits the young lady's taste.
This town has a staple food, a cereal called rice. Not unlike baking bread, it seems that it's difficult to make, but it's more filling than bread.
That reminds me, it feels similar to the snack called rice porridge that chevalier-sama's made during my night watch shift. That rice porridge should had been made only with rice, water and salt, but the deep taste really didn't make you think it was. I want to eat it once again.

Erina pulls my sleeves when I'm lost in thought.

"Pina-san, postpone your fun delusion for a bit, and listen carefully to the conversation of the female mercenaries behind."

Erina whispers rude things to me. Some punishments are necessary later.
It seems she's talking about a group of three girls. The clothes of one of them is quite worn. There are patches on the shoulder and the back, I wonder what kind of thing she's fought to get those rips? Or rather, it's good that she lives after going through situation that rip her clothes like that. Just at that time, a different female veteran mercenary who seems to be their acquaintance comes beside them.

"Hey, isn't it quite rare for you girls to eat in this kind of restaurant?"
"Nee-san, I'm sorry for not contacting you for so long. We've got a bit of

money from wolves extermination, so I've thought of eating something nice once in a while."
"That so, since the wolves packs are getting larger recently, don't chase them too deep into the forest okay?"

What does Erina want me to hear?
It seems that the veteran's hit a sore spot, the three girls fall silent from her words.

"Ah, Nee-san, I'd have liked that advice a bit earlier."
"What's this, did you guys run into a large pack of wolves?"
"That's right. We were chased hard by 30 wolves in the forest, I thought we were going to die."
"How did you get out of that without even an injury?"
"Ah, you don't believe me huh."
"I was so greatly injured that my clothes becomes tattered."

Those rips are from wolves are they.

"Oy oy, there's limit to bluffing too you know? If you get injuries from that kind of rips, you'd have been dead now right?"
"Hehee, magic medicine! I've been given magic medicine. He must have fallen for me, no doubt about it! He looks good too, I wonder if I should aim for marriage～?"
"Magic medicine you say. How many gold coins do you think a magic medicine that could heal even the scar worth. If you're a peerless beauty then I understand, but there's no way there's such a good natured person willing to save a plain young girl like you."

I see, I have such a good natured man in mind.

I look at Erina who's also listening, and we nod our heads. It's most likely chevalier-sama. He has also generously given an expensive magic medicine to a girl who's been ran over by carriage in Muno city, it's quite enough as circumstantial evidence.

"Well, even if I give in to the story of the magic medicine, how are you girls able to escape the wolves?"
"That, the three demi-human girls that had tagged along with the person

who gave that medicine defeated the wolves in a flash."
"They were great. Even though the dogkin and the catkin were children, they killed the wolf in one stab."
"However, the scalekin person was extraordinary. She defeats so many wolves with one thrust of the black spear with red glows."

It's decided.
There's no scalekin who wields a magic spear beside Liza-dono."

"Red spear? Isn't that a magic spear?"

From the veteran's words, the atmosphere of the dining room changes.

""""""Magic spear you say!""""""

The people who look like traveling nobles that have been eating fish set meals since awhile ago stand up all at once.
The nobles and their servants who have changed their facial expressions press on the young female mercenaries to inquire about it, but the veteran manages the situation, and charges for the information.

Three set of master and servants who have gained the information leave the dining room after finishing their meal in hurry.
I wonder what's going on? Magic tools are rare indeed, but I don't think it's rare enough to be chased that desperately. I think they should have dozens of gold coins if they're nobles, I wonder if they have some kind of reason for needing magic spear? I want to catch up with chevalier-sama before he's involved with troublesome things.

"Then, I wonder if the onee-sans that have been listening since awhile ago want to buy informations too?"

Looks like we've been found out.

"The ones you're talking about since before are acquaintances of me. The user of that magic spear is called Liza right?"
"Yes, she's said she is."
"What were the names of the little beastkins?"
"Wasn't it Pochi and Tama? At least remember the name of your saviors."

"But, we don't know the master's name right. I forgot to ask his name."

Normally, someone would have ulterior motive for saving people, it's really like chevalier-sama.

"I will teach you! He's a vassal of my father, chevalier Satou Pendragon desuwa! He's a master of both sword and magic!"

Ah, Karina-sama.
If you're boasting with such sparkly eyes...

"Hee, he's the young lady's favorite huh?"
"That's nice~ Chevalier-sama, that means he's a knight-sama?"
"Uwah~ I have to give up marrying into the rich huh, what a waste~"

Karina-sama says with red-face, "N, No. I don't have such relationship with that person." She's really unfamiliar with love stuff despite her age.
Erina and Taruna are also watching the young lady with warm gazes.

From the information we got from the girls, chevalier-sama was a stone throw away from Daregan city yesterday, and instead of entering the city, he had gone to the highway headed to the neighboring city, Gugurian.
I think his instinct is too sharp, it seems that the road of Karina-sama's love is going to be thorny. Bud might unexpectedly sprout on Erina instead.

Tomorrow, we're going on the boat to get ahead of him. If we don't catch up to him soon, the day where we have to stay in the barn might not be far.

I think it's alright for me to have a delusion of getting the home-made cooking of chevalier-sama.
Karaage, Tempura, Ebifurai, ah, there are too many. Crepes is nice too.
However, I want to eat the rice porridge with just the two of us together once again after all.

7-10. At the Canal's Bank.

Satou's here. There's this famous scene of huge ships joining together while advancing through the river from a movie about the romance of three kingdoms. It's not something that would happen in real life, but I'd like to see it at least once.

◇

A large river is flowing 100 meters away from the highway our wagon is running on. It can't be seen now since there's a hill obstructing it, but it'll be visible in about 10 minutes. A large ship is currently going to the same direction, we might be able to see it.

There's a 800 kilometers long great river in this territory. From the Daregan city that we've ignored yesterday, the river connects to four cities starting from the capital.

If the traveler's journal is to be believed, the canal is made by a large empire that precedes Shiga kingdom. It was made with magic right? I think the figures of giants and golems doing public construction works are great. Calculating for a bit, if they use soil magic like I've used the other day, they could make 2-3 kilometers long canal in a day, so the whole canal would probably be completed if they work hard for a year. As expected of fantasy. A large construction works sounds quite easy.

I understand that the Oyugock dukedom is vast after seeing such great large river. Isn't it enough to house 10 small countries I wonder?

The oval-shaped Muno territory is about as wide as Hokkaido, and although the dukedom is only about half as wide, the total surface area seems to be about as vast as Japan's mainland. Just like with the baron's territory, most of it consists of undeveloped mountains and forests. Why aren't they developing it I wonder?

Even though the territory is this wide, there are only seven cities. Beside the capital with its 21.000 people, there is also a large city which houses 13.000 people at the mouth of the great river facing the sea. There are 10 villages with various population number near it, ranging from less than 1000 to about 5000 people. The total population is around 720.000 people. 80% of it are human, while the remaining 20% are demi-human. The majority of the demi-human are the ratmen as slaves.

The traveler's journal states that the territory doesn't have demi-human, what does this mean I wonder. Come to think of it, baron Muno told me that he also rarely see beastkin when he was staying in the dukedom.
Since the traveler journal that I always refer writes the baron Muno territory as marquis Muno territory, it might be informations from more than 20 years ago. I'd like a newer book if possible.

As for other things of note, there are about 10 special enclaves that are like the self-governing dominion of the dwarves in the dukedom. Every one of them is about as wide as the dwarves' or wider. There are a lot more small enclaves of only around several kilometers wide, but since I can't be bothered to count all of them, I only mark the ones that are on our course.

According to the traveler's journal, there are sanctuaries for featherkin, and beasthead people in the territory. There should be another one, but it's not listed. Since we would not visit it during our journey, let's leave it alone. It's fine to visit it after we run out of place for sightseeing.

Finally, I narrow down the search for reincarnated or transported person. I'm relieved that there's none of them in this territory.

◇

Today, I drive the wagon after a long absence. Pochi and Tama on my sides are blowing something that seem to be reed flutes as hard as they could, like 'pipupipu'. They've taken Mia's lecture this morning, but it seems they can't do it properly.

Liza with her horse is coming closer. It seems she's found something.

"Master, please look over there. There is something on the other side of the forest."

I look at where Liza is pointing, but I don't see anything beside the ship's sail beyond the forest. No wait, that sail is probably the thing that Liza is talking about. Since the trees are growing on the lower terrain, the sail could be seen on the gaps between them. Unfortunately, we can't see the river yet.

"That's a ship's sail. There's a great river beyond the forest, it's probably sailing there."
"Pipo~?" "Pupuru."

Tama and Pochi who still have reed flutes on their mouth produce strange signals. Since I could predict the two's actions after that, I quickly restrain them. I tightly caught Pochi on my arm, but Tama smoothly slipped away.

"Ship~?"

Tama readily throws away the reed leaf, climbs my body, and look toward the forest. My clothes is stretched. I'd like you to stop gripping my hair since it's softly painful.
However, before I could warn Tama, Liza draws near with her horse and scoops Tama, then she puts Tama on the neck of her horse.

"Ship, I want to see nodesu."

Pochi who seems to have realized that I won't let her go no matter how much she wriggles looks up to me intensely and starts asking.

"You would see it in few minutes if you just sit tight."

She's persuaded and sit on one of my lap. After that, Pochi is acting docile, but then Mia climbs on my shoulder by using the coachman's seat as scaffold.

"Mia, it's forbidden to ride on my shoulder with skirt."
"Nn."

Mia points at the trousers she's wearing. I can't see her face, but I can imagine it looking proud.
Arisa who gets on the coachman's seat's back while supporting her body with the wagon's canopy looks at Mia and says, "Fearful girl", but I ignore it.

The river comes into view before long.
A considerably large sail ship is advancing to the same direction as us. Since it's traveling downstream, it's faster than us.

Tama who's riding on Liza's horse is waving greatly at the ship. Since we still haven't come that close to the river, I don't think anyone over there could see it.

"O~y"
"Over there is returning the greeting nodesu."

Pochi says so and waves her hands at the ship too.

"They can see eh. I wonder if the one over there is a beastkin too."
"Bird~?"
"Bird-head-san nodesu."

Arisa is right on the money. The other party is probably a birdman.
Pochi and Tama are waving their hands until the ship disappears behind the forest.

◇

Our camping location tonight is at a tributary flowing from the large river. There are camping grounds on both sides of the tributary, but we've crossed the bridge to the other side. Normally, there would be a fishing village or the likes in this kind place, but there's only an abandoned village with no one inside.

Confirming the map, I could imagine the cause of the abandonment.

It's probably because of the flock of monster located near the basin on the upstream 15 kilometers away from this tributary. Their levels are on the upper 20s, they're level 26-29 monsters called Hard Newts, they seem to have special attack using acid breath. There are nine of them.
It seems that they're preying on level 10 insect monsters that live in the cave of the basin.

Since I want to harvest the crystals and the stalactites in the cave, I'll go see it tomorrow morning or tonight.

I give Pochi and Tama harpoons and soft baskets that could be attached on their waists, they're going to catch small fish and shellfish on the river.

I go to the abandoned village to check just in case. There's already nothing left inside the houses, but there are traces of paddy fields on the cultivated land. They have plenty of water here, so they might have planted paddies. I try looking for wild growing paddies, but there's nothing after all.

"Big catch～?" "Nano desu!"

When I get back from checking the village, Pochi and Tama have also got back early. It seem that they're putting the spoils since they've had big catch.
There are large quantity shellfish that looks like clams inside the bucket that Pochi is happily showing me. A lot of palm-sized crabs and shrimps in the bucket filled with water that Tama shows me.

I'm drooling at the thought of roasted shellfish on a wire mesh dribbled with soy sauce. Seasoning it with salt and sake sounds nice too, but I'm avoiding everyone getting drunk of the smell situation.
It might be nice to divide the crab and make soup out of the half. The shrimps are to be fried. It's hard to throw away the idea of making tempura out of it.

◇

Now then, I leave the meal's preparation to Lulu, and I make a certain thing

on the bank that face river.

It can't be helped that it's hard for me to talk about it, I make a 2.5 meter long bathtub with Mud Wall and harden it with Hard Clay. Furthermore, I collect pebbles on the edge of the river and put it in the bottom of the bathtub.

Everyone can get in if it's this wide.
Just so you know, by everyone I mean the women camp. I've made a bath for one person size in a separate place. It's not like I feel particularly embarrassed and I'm fine even if we get in together, but since I think that Lulu, who's in the height of puberty, would not be able to calm down, I divide the sections for man and woman.

Next I take a large barrel and use it to carry water from the river, repeating it for several trips. It's a hard job, but by making use of my high stats and Sky Drive skill, I've got it done in a blink of an eye. Of course I've already made sure that there's no one who witness it.

Continue on, I warm the water with Furnace Flame (Forge). I stop at 45 degree. Since I always use Furnace Flame every night lately, I've mastered the regulation of temperature.

Finally, I use Pure Water to erase the slight impurity.

In addition, I leave a barrel with fresh water for temperature control and a bucket; it's complete. I also make the washing space with Hard Clay. I put a drainboard below for when we're washing our body and it's complete.

Since there's only Sauna in Muno castle, it's a bath after a long time. Let's enjoy it relaxedly.

Various reactions appears when I tell everyone that the bath is complete. I explain it in simple term since no one beside Arisa knows bath.

"Kuh, mixed bath with a boy! Ah, so this is the rewards for all the hardships until now!"
"The baths are different for man and woman you know."
"W, what did you say----! This is why, herbivores! This should have been

the time for love flirt hot spring!"

I've already expected Arisa who's in high tension toward strange direction. It's not a hot spring in the first place.

"Master, I'm applying for the duty of washing your back."
"No."
"Yes, that's a no."

I've also already expected Mia and Lulu's refusal to Nana's words, but Lulu's next words are unexpected. Moreover, they know about such custom like washing back huh.

"Master's back, I, I'll do it."
"Since master is refined, he might be embarrassed in showing his back to the woman of the same tribe. While it's presumptuous of me, I will wash it."
"Tama will do it~!"
"Pochi will wash nodesu."

Even Liza wants to participate. My back would turn red if so many wash it. I've already made tool for washing the back so there's no problem. Somehow they look disappointed when I tell them so. Liza and Lulu urge me to take the bath first, but when I tell them that there's a different bath for me, they obediently go to the bathtub. As expected, Arisa says that she will follow me to the men's bathtub, but Lulu drags her away.

I enter the men's bath and look up to the sky. I begin to feel good when I see the stars. It's too bad that the stars aren't reflected on the water surface, but the reflection of the moonlight is quite beautiful. I've not been in an open nature bath since the college time where I go around visiting unexplored hot springs.

The men's bathtub is small compared to women's, it's about the size of a common household's bathtub. The size is only enough for the short me to stretch my legs.

When I relax while leaving my back on the bathtub's wall, I hear splash sound and my body feels heavier. I know that someone is coming with Space Grasp skill, but I don't know who since I've turned off the radar. I look

up, it's Mia.

"Mia, this is the men's bath you know."
"Nn."

I gently reprove her, but she doesn't seem to care about it, sits before me and leans her back to me. I'd greatly welcome it if her outward appearance is like Nana, but since Mia doesn't even look like her secondary sex characteristic has begun, it feels like taking a bath together with a kid relative.

I'll let her do as she please since the retrieval squad seems to be heading here.

"Is there a bath in the elf village?"
"A joint one."

It's a public bath I guess?
When Mia leans her small head to my chest while I'm looking at the stars, the retrieval squad, or rather, the second raid squad arrives.

"Together~?" "Entering nodesu."

Pochi and Tama enter from both sides. You girls, no matter how small you are, the bathtub is over capacity. This is more like little girls bath rather than water bath. No, what am I saying. Since Pochi and Tama are taking the same postures as Mia, I support their backs with my hand so they don't sink.

"Wait, you three! Stealing the march is forbidden!"

Arisa is taking a daunting pose with a towel, or rather, a thin piece of cloth wrapped on her body. The cloth that sticks to her body is see-through, but I don't care. More importantly, my line of sight goes toward the senior group that has arrived behind Arisa. Nana is too brutal, no comment there, but I feel that Lulu's proportion has become better since I've met her.

In the end, I am to enter the women's bath per Arisa's suggestion. Of course, I check Lulu's and Nana's wills too, but they easily agreed unexpectedly.

Wide bath is nice after all.

There's a reckless violet-san under the water since awhile go. I can guess what she's up to, but since I've worn brand new trunks, she shouldn't be able to see what she wants. It's boorish, but since this is an emergency, I want you to overlook this.
<TLN: He's talking about wearing trunks in a bath.>

Lulu is submerging until her shoulders nearby, but I feel slightly uncomfortable with her gaze locking on me.

I lean my back on the tub's wall and resume the earlier pose. The steam isn't really doing its work, so the view before me is difficult.

I feel a bit hot, so I take out my arms off the water, and they've become pillows. My right arm is for Pochi and Tama, the left is for Mia. Lulu is waiting for her turn somehow.

"Master, I've discovered a serious matter! I request confirmation."

Nana is calling from behind Lulu. When I see there, defenseless--

"Breasts float in water! Furthermore they're tender, and somehow cute."

There's a figure of beautiful woman who has taken off the cloth which has shrouded her a while ago and floats her breast on the hot water happily. Nana, GJ. This is the scene where I have nosebleed if this is a manga.

"Nana-san, no!"
"Ecchi."

Lulu stands before Nana and block my view. It's fine that she turns her back on me, but her cute butt is completely exposed.
The slightly late Mia stands before me and spreads her limbs. Of course she's not wearing anything, so I could see various places that shouldn't be seen. I'd probably be so glad I'd cry if I'm a lolicon.

The bath time passes with such noise.

Liza seems to like the bath, and enters for the longest time. The next morning, since she looks really sad when she sees the bath that has become cold, I warm it and then she takes a morning bath. I should make a folding bathtub I guess?

After that day, Nana begins to study water magic from Mia.
Since she's awfully happy with floating breasts, I wonder if she would make a water dress?

7-11. At the Canal's Bank (2)

Satou's here. We've always used seasoning casually, but aren't there only a few people who know what they're made of?　Mayonnaise, Worcestershire sauce, dressing. You only understand the merit after it has disappeared, or so they say.

◇

"N, no, you can't, master."

Lulu looks at me with anxious face.

"It's alright. Now, relax yourself."
"Y, yes."

I put my hands on the waist of Lulu who's frightened while inching back, leaning her body on me.

"Let's go, Lulu."
"I, I can't. It's too big."
"You don't need to worry. Believe what I say."

While calming Lulu who's still anxious, I put my hands on top of Lulu's delicate hands.

And--

Lulu's finger pulls the magic gun.

◇

At the waterfall basin that spreads before our eyes below, there are six giant monsters resembling newts that exceed 10 meters acting as they please. The monster's name is Hard Newt, and their special ability is acid breath it seems.
Every one of them are on upper level 20s, they're relatively strong.

There's a reason why I take Lulu along for monsters hunting despite frightening her.

During Muno incident, Pochi's level had become lower than the others, so I took her on a monster hunting date when there were monsters on the highway near our camping ground. Arisa and Mia found out about it and protested that it was too unfair, so since it can't be helped, I promised to take them on monster hunting dates whenever there were strong monsters on the highway near our camping grounds.

And then, they did rock-paper-scissor to decide their turns, but not only Arisa and Mia, Nana and Lulu also participated in it; eventually the order for the hunting date was Mia=>Lulu=>Nana=>Arisa. Doing it one-by-one is inefficient, but apparently, "Just the two of us together.", seems to be important.

About three days ago, I found reasonably strong monsters, so I took Mia along, but even though we had defeated seven level 15 caterpillar monsters, her level wasn't raised. Apparently, it's hard for elves to level up.

◇

"M, master one of them is coming here. W, what should we do."

Lulu desperately clings to my chest. Desperate Lulu is cute too.
I invoke Remote Arrow outside of her vision, and after a shot from the magic gun hits the monster, I destroy the hard newt monster easily with the arrow. It seems that the remaining five monsters have recognized us as enemies. Since the newts are climbing the cliff, I shoot them with Remote Stun to knock them down the cliff.

"Lulu, drink this, and shoot the second shot afterward."

I make Lulu drinks magic recovery potion, and let her charge the magic gun. I had thought that she could supply 30 shots since she was level 3, but her magic power was halved with just one charge. It seems that the charge efficiency is greatly different for each person.

Maybe her level has leveled up after defeating one monster, this time one charge only consumes 20% of her magic power. We aim together like before and shoot.
I destroy the monster with remote arrow after the magic gun hit it, after doing this work routine for three minutes, the extermination of six monsters is complete.

I leave Lulu who's completely exhausted after her first combat on the cliff, and go down to collect the monsters' remains. Looks like there are three monsters higher leveled than the ones earlier on the other side of the waterfall, but Lulu's level should have been raised to 7-10 after defeating this many. Let's leave the rest for the hunting with Nana.

I carry Lulu who's not feeling well on my arms, and run on the water surface of the great river along the highway leading to the tributary, back to where everyone is. Sky Drive skill is way too convenient.

◇

"Ara? Lulu what's wrong? Are you tired from your first battle?"
"A, Arisa. I, I'm fine."

Arisa runs anxiously when we get back to the camp. Lulu has firmly asserted that she's okay, but she looks pale.
Her body seems to be surprised with the radical level up, just like Liza and the others have been in the labyrinth. If we take that time into consideration, she should recover if she sleeps for 3-4 hours. If it's painful, I'll give her an anti-fever potion to drink.

"W, wait, just what kind of things were you guys fighting?"

"Six newts on the tributary ahead."

Arisa who has confirmed Lulu's level presses on me. Lulu's level has gone up radically from 3 to 13 from just fighting six monsters. Her level rises considerably higher than my expectation. There might be First Attack bonus or something like in games.

Lulu has gained new skills, the [Cooking] skill that Lulu has longed for appears. Furthermore, she's also got [Shooting], and [Sniping], probably due to monster hunting, and there's also [Compounding] skill, maybe because she's helped me compounding before, and lastly, she somehow gets [Chanting] skill too. Lulu has never participated chanting training even once before, so I wonder why she's learned it? I'm envious.
Arisa knows the answer to that.

"Eh? Chanting? Ah~ I might know. Lulu has always practiced chanting together with me since we're small. She didn't learn the skill until now probably because her skill point wasn't enough maybe?"
"Then, wouldn't she learn Mind magic?"
"Somehow Lulu isn't able to think of anything related to science. She was just bad at magic theory no matter what, and dropped out halfway."

Drop out....

"Isn't fine if she just memorize it?"
"That's a wrong way of thinking! You have to understand the chant's meaning if you want to use magic!"

Looks like Arisa is quite peculiar with the aesthetic.
I'll teach Lulu some chants in secret next time. She might learn magic skill on the next level up after all. Or rather, I'd like her to teach me the chanting skill instead.

Arisa puts Lulu on top of a cushion, and cools her with a wet towel. I take out a painkiller and an anti-fever potion and hand them to Arisa.

"Thank you. However, you shouldn't ease the pain from level up growth with medicine. I haven't tried it myself, but it seems that the stat increase

would be bad."

Hoo, is that so. I've almost made her drink it.

I leave Lulu's care to Arisa, and ask Liza to make an easy to digest food for one person. Pochi and Tama have gone to the great river to catch fish. Since we've had tempura yesterday, I guess I'll make fried white meat tonight.

While thinking such thing I lead Nana for sortie.

Hunting with Nana is easy since she could use Magic Arrow.
Instead, the soft feeling during the traveling to the hunting ground, and the clinging body with wet clothes when we're in the waterfall caves is so sexy, it's dangerous. I'd like to praise my reasoning mind.

The hunt ends with nothing noteworthy happening, and I collect crystals, jades and a bit of the stalactites inside the cave. If Nana didn't stop to admire the limestone cave for 30 minutes, it would had been over faster.

I wonder if the newts here are special and gives a lot of exp, Nana has also leveled up from 5 to 12. She has learned new [One-handed Sword], [Shield], [Parry], and [Horseback] skills. It seems her Nature Magic skill has leveled up too and she could use new magic, [Shelter], and [Sharp Edge] now.

◇

"In just half an hour, Lulu had surpassed my level, and in another hour Nana had equaled me. I think this is quite serious."
"Agreed."
"We want strong enemies too!"
"To the prey!"

Arisa and Mia who are in seiza with their hands on their laps are having a meeting.
What kind of farce is that?

"Prey~?"

"Meat, better than fish nano desu!"

Huh? Pochi and Tama have come back before I know it. Their buckets are full with caught fish. Looks like they have also properly catch shellfish, shrimps and the likes. I feel like eating Paella when I see the shellfish. Sadly I can't make it since I don't know the recipe.
Pochi seems to be dissatisfied with having fish every day. Maybe I should make some steak from the wolf meats.

Lulu seems to have woken up, but she still looks unwell. I decide to cancel our departure today and let Lulu and Nana rest.

When I tell Arisa and Mia about the insect monsters in the cave, I end up sortieing for the third time while carrying the two on both of my sides. The two hate to have their level behind more than being alone together.

"Uha! R, running on water like this. A water strider!"
"Float walk?"

I've already told about this to Arisa and the others, but they seem to have thought that it's not a skill that could be used for prolonged time.
Mia is probably talking about Float Walk, an intermediate level water magic.
I'll surprise them by flying in the sky next time.

"No wonder Lulu's and Nana's hunts were fast."
"Convenient right?"
"Nn."

The insect hunts in the cave is done by repeatedly having Arisa and Mia attack first with their magic and for me to destroy the monster. Since the two's magic power run out in the middle of the hunt, the pattern changes into me attacking first with Remote Stun, then the two attack with short spear and dagger to give damage, and I finish off with the fairy sword.

An insect monster gives less exp than 10% of the exp gain from the newt monster earlier. From Arisa's observation of the exp during the hunt, it seems that she would level up once after 40-50 monsters.
I can't check my own exp since the counter has stopped with number 9s

lined up. Judging from the digits, there's no mistake that it's more than ten millions. There's a gauge that indicate the percentage to the next level, I only know that there are still 80% left until then. I don't want to think the concrete points.

The high-pace efficiency-maniac-like hunt ends after defeating more than a hundred small monsters for two hours, and the result is that both Arisa and Mia level up by 2. In spite of the fact that Arisa's level remain higher (than Mia's), she would level up again after a bit more. The required exp for elves to level up might be around twice of human.

Nevertheless, I wonder what do these many monsters eat to multiply so much?

Mia answers that question.

"Spirits."

We can't see it, but it seems that there's a place underground lake with transparent water inside the cave where spirits gush out, the monsters are predating them. Correctly speaking, it's not predation, but absorption it seems, however since Mia doesn't know the detail, I'll ask the adults in Bornean forest about it.

I try to stare hard at the underground lake, but unfortunately I can't see the spirits.

◇

I'm practicing the fairy sword to master it after the meal to help digest the food.

I raise the sword overhead, stop, put magic into it and swing downward. And then when the sword is down I suck up the magic power from it, and quickly raise the sword that has become lighter.

I'm getting used with the weight-changing characteristic of fairy sword and

the swing speed increases little-by-little. In 30 minutes, I've grasped the movement I want after repeating without stopping, I end the practice.

I've got applauses for some reason. Everyone has surrounded, watching me before I know it.

"Real~ly, cheat huh. Do you know what you've been doing?"
"It's just a form practice though?"

Like reaching the second self-taught form or something?
Arisa lays her hand on my nape, draws her face close and whispers.

"You don't seem to understand huh. Normally, one can't pour magic power into a sword that fast. Incidentally, you've even dispersed magic power from the sword, I'll say this again, something like absorption is impossible."

Is that so?
Since it's possible with Liza's magic spear, I've thought that it's obvious though?

"Isn't it because they think they can't that they end up not able to do it?"
"There's no way it's like that right? If people could so easily do it, something like magic potion isn't needed then. When you need to consume MP for magic, you could do something like absorbing magic power from a loaded magic tool, it could become the only battery."

Arisa releases her hands from my nape and takes up a giving-up pose.

I see, it's a good story.

I thank you Arisa. Since it's poor if it's just words, I hug her. Since Arisa is a mysterious creature who's fine with attacking but gets embarrassed when she's attacked by the proactive opponent, it's fun to occasionally do surprise attack.

For the time being, I should check the efficiency by pouring and absorbing magic power on the sword, putting it inside the storage for one night and the absorb the magic power from it; I decide to check how is the decay.

According to my expectation, it should be able to hold the same amount of magic power as I usually put it into.

7-12. Gururian City Disturbance

Satou's here. When I became a working adult, I ate a lot of convenient store's sweets for the sugar supply of my head. When I was a college student, I felt like I only ate Japanese confectioneries due to the influence of the lab senior.

◇

"When you get to Gururian city, don't miss out on eating the round red bean paste! Though since it's one big copper coin for one, it's not easy to have one. For a merchant like Onii-san, you'd get laughed by your business partners if you've never eaten one."
"What kind of sweets is it?"
"Umm~ you make this white lump and put the sweet black lump as the main part around it."

The sisters who are with us at the campground before Gururian city are talking about the established sweet in the city. It's somehow an imaginable, yet misleading explanation.

"You've never eaten one either have you. This girl becomes interested in the sweet after a merchant boasts about it in the village."
"Fuhn. When I get my wages at the apprenticeship, then. I'll eat it first and foremost~."
"Wages you say, it'll be years before that."

As I understand, these sisters come from a village nearby to be apprentices in a merchant store at Gururian city. They're guaranteed of necessities like food and shelter, but in exchange they won't get wages until they become full-fledged. This is like Edo era.

Such employment method might be unexpectedly cheaper than buying slaves for labor.

"Master, the merchants seem to be departing."
"Then, we should go too."

Liza comes to call the dawdling me.
Looks like the merchants who are with us at the camping ground are departing. There are three group of merchants. I heard a lot of stories from them when I offered them ales and fish last night.

The most troubling story is, "In a remote place deep in the mountain, red light could be seen, and sounds of hammer hitting something resounded all through the night.", such ghost story. It really feels like something I've done myself.

Thanks to my night work that's become a ghost story, I've successfully refined and casted a lot of tin and zinc. I made mud walls to prevent the noise from leaking out, but it didn't seem to be enough.

Since we could arrive at Gururian city before noon with the wagon, I invite the sisters to go there together.

"Yay!"
"Thank you very much. Is it alright?"
"I don't mind, we have the same destination anyway."

These sisters are doing reckless thing of walking to Gururian city on foot. It seems the distance between the sisters' village to the Gururian city is two days away by foot, good thing that they don't get attacked by beasts. Last night, they slept with us in our tent, but their chastities could've been in danger if we weren't there.

Our wagon joins with the other merchants' carriages while advancing. There are a group of suspicious young nobles gathering on the open space before Gururian city, so I decide not to go first and blend with the other merchants instead.

◇

"Merchants who are visiting Gururian city! We desire magic swords. We promise to the people who give us magic swords that we will give them favor as purveyors in the future!"

An man past his 20s wearing knight-like clothes is appealing to the merchants who are lining up to enter the city. Naturally, no one answers it. There's a similar noble at the dwarf village, he's probably the same kind of him.

I've stored Liza's magic spear inside the Holding Bag since it looks like it'd get entangled. It became a problem when we were entering Muno city back then, I had put it away before this. Right now Liza is hanging a normal sword on her waist.

"Hey hey, that noble-sama said that he'd make you a purvoyer if you gave him a magic sword!　It's amazing right, Onee-chan."
"It sure is. However, such expensive things like magic swords have nothing to do with us."
"You girls, you'd get deceived in the city like that you know?"

Arisa worryingly butts in the carefree talk of the sisters.

"That one is, you know, 『We do not have money. However we want magic swords. Give it to us for free. As the compensation, we'll give you favor if we succeed in the future. Don't complain even if we don't succeed.』, convenient for them alone, such nonsense isn't it?"
"Uwah, so it's like that. I didn't know."
"Arisa-chan, you're smart even though you're small."

The sisters get down the wagon with Nana's help. They line up on people's queue since the queues for carriage and people are different.

"Satou-san, thank you~."
"Thank you very much. On top of letting us slept together, you even gave us meal all day."
"Don't worry about it."
"That won't do, we'll be working in a utensil store called Midoriya, so if you need something there do pay us a visit, I can't give you discount, but I'll prepare the best goods for you."

I think employees would only be given chores, but I accept the girls good wills and thank them.

The nobles and their servants from earlier seem to be negotiating with the merchants who are queuing one by one. I'll enter the city before they get here.

We go toward the gate without lining up. Nana and Liza have confirmed with the gatekeeper that nobles could be prioritized to enter first. Even though it's not like no-check admission in the self-governing dominion of the dwarves, they only check us formally.
I could hear, "Eh", and "So he's a noble-sama." from behind. Come to think of it, I've not told them my house name.

◇

During the past several days, I've made swords for Pochi and Tama--ones that would equal Liza's magic spear--but I've not been able to produce satisfactory ones.
I could give them the magic swords from the storage, but they're too big for anyone beside Nana, so I try to make ones myself.

There are five types of magic swords.

The first is the type that incorporates the magic circuit from Trazayuya's holy sword research. There are many good magic swords of this type. That being the case, the degree of difficulty is abnormally high.
The gold and silver wooden magic swords are of this type.

The second is the magic sword like the one elder Dohar has made. It's a type that could accept magic power without special magic circuit as it's a characteristic of magic metal like mithril or adamantite. It's hard to acquired the material, but their stabilities are their strong points.

The third is weapons made from monster's parts, just like Liza's magic spear. The performance is similar to the second type, but the individual

difference is too great, weapons made from the same monster's parts could have great difference, there are a lot of poor ones.

The fourth is cursed weapons. Even though it has permanent magic grant, it basically gives harm to the user, so people who use this type are few. At present, I've never actually seen anyone who does beside elder Dohar.

The fifth is a type where the blade part and the magic circuit are made separately, and then attached to become a magic sword. I noticed this when I dissembled a magic sword from the storage. The blade part is ordinary, but the grip part has magic circuit imprinted. When you put in magic power, it gives [Strengthen] and [Dexterity] effects. It even quickens the sword's drawing speed.
You can separately makes magic circuit on the blade and the grip, this is easier than engraving magic circuit on the blade part.

The ones I've produced in the experiments are the first and the third type.

For the method from Trazayuya's document, I tried to create the circuit during the casting process of the sword, but since the circuit liquid was weak to heat, it dissolved halfway through. The sword can roughly accept magic power, but the circulated magic power is distorted, there's no practical use for it.

Next, I made blades by shaving shell from beetle monster and hard newt's bones, and permeated circuit liquid on the gap to improve the magic conduction. For once, real-like magic swords are finished, but the aspects such as strengths are inferior compared to Liza's magic spear so I put it on reserve.
I got [Bone Crafting] when I was shaving bones, although it seemed to be of little use.

◇

Sweet smells is drifting the moment we enter the city. It smells like a Japanese sweets, or rather, red bean pastes.

"Kuu, what a nice smell!"
"Is it Japanese sweets."

Arisa's and my tensions are rising while the others see us curiously.

"Young gentleman over there, how about some excellent round red bean paste?"

A girl of around a high schooler's age is selling while carrying a food tray on her neck. It's like a style of the boxed lunch seller from Showa era. Unfortunately her clothes is a normal plain village girl-like, not Japanese clothes. She's wearing a short apron on her waist.

I buy several round red bean pastes and distribute it to everyone. Mia looks a bit unwilling, but when I tell her, "It's a sweet snack made from grains and beans.", she timidly puts it on her mouth.

"I think it needs a bit more sugar."

Arisa makes a slight request, but everyone has already finished eating.

"Fuh, this is, that right."
"Umu, that huh."

Yes, it's an [Ohagi]. The inside of the dumpling is not sticky rice but granulated glutinous rice. The red bean paste is coarse too, it feels like [Ohagi] from long ago.

"So it's really true, this city's name is."
"I wonder if it's a bad pun."

People would not know that it's a bad pun if they don't know Japanese language so I won't tell this to anyone, but this [Gururian]. The one who's named this city is definitely a Japanese who likes bad pun.
<TLN: Gururi:Round, An:Red bean paste. Yep.>

◇

We've wasted some time from buying the sweets. First of all, I have to go to the lord's place and hand Nina-san's letter.
Lady Karina and the maid squad are inside the ship that's currently entering the port, but they most likely will remain on the ship until it reach the capital. Since Raka should not be able to detect us here, there's probably no need to worry.

It seems that The First preliminary fights to enter the qualification are happening on the public parks here and there in this city now. The name [The First] is making me cry.

It looks like you need to pay three copper coins on the agency at the town hall to get the participation proof, and when there are 10 people who have gathered, the first preliminary round could begin.
A match happens every time two people gather, and after gathering 32 people who have win a match, the preliminary match is over, and the second match begin it seems. People who have won four first preliminary matches could participate on the second preliminary round. I see, I guess each city has to have best four. It has been a week since it begins, and there are already 20 people who have passed the first round.

There's a preliminary match taking place on the park near the main road, I stop the wagon and watch it. Since Pochi and Tama are restless whenever cheers are raised on the public park, I decide to watch it for a bit.

A sharp sighted weaselkin girl tried to sell me wager checks but I refused. When I ask Pochi why she is sniffing violently, it seems that she's smelled yakitori scent. I ask Nana to buy it. There doesn't seem to be any idiot that tries to pick-up Nana who's wearing a full body armor from head to toe.

I distribute the yakitori and minced fish meat on sticks that Nana's bought to everyone. Even Mia has bought fruit water unnoticed.

The people who participate in the preliminary fight are mixed goods of mostly level 3-7, but some who exceed level 10 rarely mixed in too. The ones who are fighting now are both on the upper level 10s.

They both wear leather armors, one-handed swords and shields, they are long-time mercenaries. Their levels aren't different with Liza and the

others, but they're slow, and there are too many useless movements during the swords' blows exchanges. I'd say that the beastkin girls wouldn't lose against either of them, This is not favoritism.

Apparently, the winner of this match would be eligible to participate in the first preliminary round, so the cheering is quite frantic. However, to watch a game during weekdays like this, I wonder if this gallery is fine with their works?

It's probably not because of that needless worry, but a tumult can be heard from the public park nearby.

"It's terrible! Monsters have appeared inside the city!"

That is terrible.
I confirm the map, but there are surprisingly a lot of monsters in the whole city. Looks like they are cavalry monsters called running dragons. It seems that most of them are assigned as the private soldiers of the viceroy.

There is no monster at the direction where the voice from before comes.

The one there is a demon--

Moreover, there's a troublesome person nearby.

7-13. Gururian City Disturbance (2)

Satou's here. I had often went to a cat cafe, but after I became a working adult, the chance to visit zoo or aquarium remarkably decreased. Even though they're safe places for having a date.

◇

The demon that has appeared in Gugurian city is of the same grade as the one from Muno city. The species is of the same Short Horn demon too, level 30, and it also has the same skills, [Strength], [Hard Body], [Transformation], [Flame Palm]; it has no magic skills. It's a demon totally suited to become a vanguard.

Nevertheless, I was certain that there was no demon before we entered this city. Or rather, I could affirm that there's no demon in the whole dukedom. It doesn't seem like the demon can teleport, so it's probably sent or summoned by someone.

I leave the horses and the wagon to Lulu and Nana, and we go to the street against the escaping crowds. When we're moving, I tell everyone that the one ahead is not a monster but a demon, its level, skills, and things to be careful during the fight.

Occasionally, there are people jumping on the air as if playing trampoline from the direction of the crowds. Even though the demon can't use magic, it doesn't seem to be weak. When the escaping people become scarce, the demon's figure can be seen.

The demon looks different than the one from Muno city, having bigger build, and six arms, it looks like a gorilla. The only common point between them is the red short horns, like their species' name implies.

Warriors who are fighting the demon are surrounding it. Several destroyed carriages from the battles are scattered around along with corpses among

the heaps. It looks like there are survivors inside the carriage. Many holes are opened on the buildings that face the street. Near the demon, there's a soldier with heavy equipment and blue shell shield doing well against it with his shield. His level is 29, equaling the demon. I guess there's no need for back up with this?

And then as if betraying that thought, the demon swings its strong arms and blow some people to the air. Those people come flying here.

I quickly dash and catch one of them.
I release Cubes for the remaining two to cut their momentum. With this, at least they won't die. Endure it if you're a man.

I talk to the person I've caught.
Yes, the reason why we take action so conspicuously is because there's this girl near the demon.

"Please don't be so rash, Karina-sama."
"Eh, eh, Sa... no, Sir Pendragon."

Despite being confused when she knows that I'm the one who's received her, lady Karina calls my name. I know that she's faltering, but what kind of ritual she's doing by joining and separating her hands with stretched fingers in front of her breasts. Is she perhaps embarrassed?
Furthermore, while in my arms, she's muttering "To be hugged by someone other than father.", "He's unexpectedly strong.", or "The honeymoon is in the royal capital I wonder.", her monologue is running wild toward cryptic direction. It looks like she's not accustomed with physical contacts from the opposite sex.

"Princess carry is forbidden!"
"Nn, forbidden."

Arisa who's caught up kicks me from behind. I wonder if my butt have footprints imprinted?
Even though lady Karina has Raka's protection, she still has lost around 20% of her health, so I ask Arisa and Mia for the healing. And then, when I put lady Karina down, for some reason she holds my sleeves, and it seems

the person herself doesn't understand why.

"Master, the front line has collapsed. I will assist them."

Liza declares so and heads to the battlefield. Pochi and Tama also charge toward Liza's direction after greeting Karina's breasts from both sides.
What was that, I'm envious.

Since the demon is going to counter Liza's attack with triple punches, I intercept it by shooting Short Stun on every fists.

Liza's magic spear pierce the defenseless body of the demon that has lost its balance. She's activated magic edge of course. The attack only decreases 5% of the demon's health, but I think it's amazing when you compare it with the accumulated damage the demon has incurred.

Pochi and Tama who are late attack the bottom of the demon's knee simultaneously. The damage isn't even 1% of its health, but it seems to be painful since the demon raises a short scream and retaliates using its tail toward Pochi and Tama.
I throw someone's helmet that has fallen near my foot toward the demon's abdomen. It's so troublesome that I have to chant whenever I use magic since the peanut gallery is watching.
Since the helmet breaks the demon's posture, the tail attack loses its strength and Pochi and Tama become able to receive it by crossing their dagger, changing its course to the sky. The two make us of that vector well and take some distances away from the demon.

That reminds me, the heavy soldier from before is gone.

When I look below, the soldier has fallen near the demon's feet. The metal armor below his arms is greatly dented, blood is spewing out of his mouth.

"Pochi, Tama, take the heavy soldier to the safe zone when you have the chance!"
"Ay~""Roger!"

I throw Remote Stun on the Short Horn demon. During that gap, Pochi and Tama swiftly close-in and drag the heavy soldier to the peanut gallery.

"Before it was the intermediate class Great Hammer randomly shot, and just now it was advanced class Divine Hammer. He must be the [Black Gale]-dono who has his name comes out on the first preliminary round."
"No, [Black Gale] should have been a middle-aged man, he must the magic warrior, [Red Fighting Demon]."

The peanut gallery are making some irresponsible commentary. Who the heck are those people with Chuuni-like names. The peanut gallery are hiding in the building not too far away. I wouldn't have heard it if I didn't have the straining ear skill.

Since the defensive position has exited the scene, I guess I should substitute for it.

"■▼■▲　▲■▲■　▲▲Shield."

The materialized magic shield stops the blow from the fist of the demon that has got up and came to attack. It's an unexpectedly prolonged punch. That's not a metaphor, the punch really elongates for five meters, so I have to pay attention.

If it's stretching again next time, I'll tie it up like in manga.

"Over here you gorilla!"

Using provocation skill, I rob the demon's attention to me. With this, it shouldn't change its aim even if Liza and the others attack to some extent.

"I will assist you! Sir Pendragon!"

Lady Karina is calling my name in loud voice as if she's advertising to the public. Please stop it.
She's sending glances at me frequently as if expecting me to call her name back, but I ignore it. She must not be spoiled.

Before she arrives at the demon, Arisa's and Mia's magic hit it first. Arisa's

magic, Flash, burns the demon's eyes, Mia's attack, Mustard Mist, roasts the demon's lungs.
Mia, you'd roast my lungs too you know? I look at Mia with critical eyes, but she turns her head away.

"It's prohibited to look away in a battlefield desuwa."

Karina who's expressly came before me intercepts the demon's attack, and got blown away. Raka was shining before the attack hit her, and multiple small shield of lights was stacked defending her, that was probably why the damage was practically none.
I wonder if you could distill this automatic defense from Raka and mass produce it? I want to have everyone equipped with it by all mean.

Accompanied by dummy chanting, I invoke five Remote Arrows and launch them.
The demon's health is reduced by 30% in one go. That is from the attack of Remote Arrow from a distance. Since the demon is the type that specialize in physical attack and defense, its magic defense is probably weak.

"Arisa, please cover me with attack magic. Mia, please attack with water ball or water polo."
"Okkey."
"Nn."

Arisa makes Light Dagger flies toward the demon, but it gets destroyed with just a swing from the demon's arm. The water ball that comes a bit late only makes the demon wets.

Oh? Isn't it weak to magic?

"Well now, junior class magic like Light Dagger won't be effective against a demon."
"But, the magic arrows just now worked right."
"That was either intermediate class Javelin or advanced class Multiple Javelin."
"No, it must not have been Multiple Javelin indeed, is it~?"

The peanut gallery are noisy since awhile ago. Ten men and women with

matching uniforms have come into my view. I wonder if they're magician's apprentices?

As they've hoped, I chant dummy intermediate class ice magic spell and shoot [Freeze Water] to the demon. The aim is the places that's got wet from Mia's attack.
Liza attacks with her spear at that place in no time at all, and the demon's arm is successfully broken.

Pochi, Tama, and the revived lady Karina throw small barrel filled water, and with the fairy sword, I cut the small barrels that have come near the demon making it wet to the skin.
I could end this by slashing the demon with the fairy sword, but it would be too conspicuous with all these peanut gallery.

Alright, now I just have to freeze the demon, and have Liza knock it down to end this.

◇

I wonder if the temperature drops too low for the frozen demon, the section that's received Liza's spear attack crumbles and scatters away. The fragments that have become small disappear with black smokes. Wagahai-kun left a corpse, but lower grade demon would disappear huh? The splitter also became black dust back then.

The lower part of its body remain as it is, but a magic core that shines dull light peeks through the remaining upper part. Liza casually collects it. I look at the place where my crisis perception is reacting, a small red horn has fallen on the ground.

I appraise that, it's an item called [Short Horn]. The explanation part is written in demon language. I could roughly read it after I raise the skill level to 5. Unlike with the humans' magic tools, the explanation is simple.

"Transform a creature with intelligence on-site into a demon." is written there. The reason why a demon had abruptly appeared inside the city was

because of this item.

I check if there is any other [Short Horn] in this city just in case, but there's none.
I try to search for it in the entire territory, but it only returns freeze-like sound, so I search in turn while limiting the range. Since I can't search the inside the Item Box and Holding Bag (of other people), this is only for peace of mind, but it's better than not doing it.

I put the Short Horn into my storage, and begin the work of helping the injured people.

◇

First, to the luxurious carriage. There are four survivors inside this carriage.
There's a torn-off cart on top of the overturned carriage.
Since it'd be too conspicuous if I lift it, I blow the cart away with Short Stun. I secretly hold the carriage's body so that it doesn't shake.

I get on the carriage's top and look inside. It seems that they're all unconscious. There are a boy and a girl with black hairs of around 10 years old, a smart-looking woman past her twenties wearing civil official clothes. And a 15 years old pink haired girl wearing a dress. Arisa's hair is also like that, but pink... is this a manga!

Even though the dress girl probably doesn't hear the retort inside my mind, she's waking up.

She seems to be still feeling hazy.

"Black hair? He, ro, sama?"

The girl only murmured so and fainted again.
This is my first encounter with the princess of the small Rumooku kingdom, Menea.

7-14. Gururian City Disturbance (3)

Satou's here. There are people who say that the history of mankind is a history of war. I remember feeling that it's real when I watch a video showing world map and pie chart of outbreak of wars around the world. Even in the parallel world, humankind's acts don't change.

◇

"In praise of defeating the demon who had attacked the city. The viceroy of Gururian city awards you this medal."

The bald civil official who's standing next to the young viceroy reads the award aloud. This is the audience room inside Gururian city castle. It's only about a quarter as wide as the one in Muno city, but there are twenty heavy soldiers equipped with halberds lined up on both sides.
At this time, I had a carefree impression, "It's nice when it really feels like a castle~", but in truth, later Arisa told me that the viceroy guards were reinforced as a precaution against me.

The only one inside the audience room is me. The other members are waiting in another room. I'm unarmed since I've given the fairy sword and the short cane to Arisa.

And then, the meeting with the viceroy ends without any problem and I withdraw.
In the end, the viceroy only said, "It was arduous."

◇

After leaving the audience room, I'm guided by a maid to a different room than the one Arisa and the others are.

There's the bald civil official from earlier inside. He's the consul of Gururian city.

"Sir Pendragon, I can't thank you enough for your assistance on the occasion. Your help is admirable."
"Even though I'm of the lowest ranked noble, I'm still one of Shiga kingdom's nobility. I was just fulfilling my duty."

We get down to the business after the regular greetings.
I talk about the state of the demon that has attacked Muno city, and the scales of its army. Even though they've known the detail from the duke, it's better to check on the fact. Continuing on, we're comparing it with the demon that has attacked Gururian city.

"I do not understand. I cannot read the demon's intention."
"That's right is it, it's a different story if it has thoroughly prepared armies to attack like in Muno city, but there's no meaning in just rampaging around in the city."

Since there's that item, it might have only been a diversion for the rampage.
I don't report the thing about the magic tool [Short Horn]. Since I don't know the character and ability of the viceroy, I won't report an item this dangerous. If the information about it carelessly spread, it'd be scary if witch hunts happened. Arisa also opposed in reporting it.

"Sir Pendragon, won't you tell me your opinion?"
"It might be a diversion, or possibly a way for implanting fears in the people."

The consul has probably expected my answer. He's nodding solemnly.
Actually, when I was searching during the wait for the audience earlier, short horn demons had appeared in other cities. I haven't confirmed if they've been exterminated, but there should be people who can defeat them in this season of martial arts tournament.

Afterwards, we finished our talk after exchanging some opinions.
The viceroy's butler hands me an invitation for banquet before I head back.
Even though I've intended to take Pochi and the others along to go on Gugurian city trying food around, keeping the nobles company is

troublesome.

◇

When I get back to the waiting room, the people who greet me are not only Arisa and the others. I've expected lady Karina and her maids, but there are also some unknown women. They're probably not servants of the viceroy since they're wearing poor clothes. When I check on their stats, they're slaves with [No Master] displayed.

"Chevalier Pendragon-sama, I'm sorry for my impoliteness the other day. I thank you for saving me during the demon's attack."

I wonder who? I don't remember helping her though?

"There was a cart carriage for slaves that fell down on the site earlier right, she was on it she said."

I see. But impoliteness--that's right, isn't she the part of the group who asked me to hand over mithril sword in Bollhart city.
However, why is she a slave? When I ask her, she replies in vexation.

"Actually, we were deceived by the weaselkins that day."

Her words aren't to the point, but, "We followed the weaselkins when they said that they had magic swords.", "They asked 30 gold coins for the magic sword.", "Since we only had five gold coins, we agreed to have a loan contract for the sword until the tournament was over.", that seems to be the case, I wonder where is the deceiving part?

"The scam was after that. We went straight to the Daregan city, but we were attacked by tigerkins and lionkins thieves and got the magic sword stolen."
"Were they real thieves?"
"If they were real, then my master and me would have already been killed. When we returned to Bollhart city, we met the weaselkin that had loaned us the magic sword. He saw through the fact that the magic sword was stolen. When I think about it again, he obviously knew that we didn't have the

magic sword."

Isn't it paranoia?
The weaselkin would know that they were attacked by the thieves if they see their tattered clothes, and there might be those kind of chivalrous thieves who didn't kill their victims.

"That, you see."

Arisa adds the fact that the women who are on the same carriage are telling similar stories. As for the young nobles, they seem to have been sold to a mine city on the nearby small kingdom.
The women were taken here by lady Karina who appealed directly to the viceroy, or rather the consul. 'They've become slaves and don't know if their masters taken to the mine city have died, don't you feel sorry for them,' she said.

"If this story is true, this won't end in just the weaselkins getting caught, but a war against the weaselkins kingdom won't it?"

No wait, the weaselkins might be instigating someone to go to war against them instead. There seem to be war factions among the weaselkins.
According to the story from the drinking bout with the merchants last night, it had been 15 years since the weaselkin merchants entered the dukedom. Around 18 years ago, there were 7-9 kingdoms on the border of the dukedom, and there were principalities of lizardkin and tigerkin beyond those kingdoms. The weaselkins has swallowed those demi-humans kingdoms and became big, and they're still growing their empire even now. It seems that they've never meddled with human countries, but last year, they've utterly annihilated one of the small countries and touched the border of the dukedom.

Well, let's hope that even if war happens, it won't spread to Muno territory. There's no soldiers to dispatch, Nina-san should be able to judge well.

I'll leave the problem to the concerned person. I ring the bell that's on the table to call the maid who's standing by outside the room, and pass her a letter for the consul. It's hard to orally convey the content of the letter. It's up to the consul if the girl can be meet.

◇

"Nevertheless, this sure is a world with many troubles."
"Fantasy world is like this you know."

Right now, I'm with Arisa on a jewelry shop near the viceroy castle. Of course it's for the banquet tonight. Arisa said, "Your clothes is already quite noble-like, but there aren't enough decorations.", so we went to buy some accessories. I only had wristwatch in the original world since I liked it simple; I didn't know what to choose, so I brought Arisa along.

The ones who will attend the banquet tonight are lady Karina and me. I can't bring slaves or demi-humans, so there's only Nana among my companions that I could take along, but since the viceroy's wife has Status Check skill, I ask lady Karina instead. The wife is only level 4, so the Status Check skill level is low and can only know name, but there's no need to take the risk. I have to learn the nature magic [Fake Patch] quickly.

I check on the accessories that Arisa and the shopkeepers have recommended, but there's nothing that fancy me. The accessories in this world are fundamentally rough. Most of the goods are all about seeing the limit on how many jewels or gold can be put on it.

If the banquet isn't tonight, I'd make one myself.

I check on the market price while ignoring Arisa's and the shopkeeper's conversation. Processed goods are more expensive after all. I've saved a lot of raws of amber, corundum, and zircon when I discover the veins by chance. I also have other ores like jade and crystal, I want to make magic tools for polishing or learn the mountain magic, [Polish].

In the end, I picked "Something that won't embarrass me even if I meet the viceroy." The 30 gold coins spent are truly wasteful.

◇

When I'm going to the room that the viceroy has prepared, a maid of this mansion is waiting for me, and says that there's a visitor for me.
The other party is the pink-haired princess and her companions. I've originally intended to meet her, so this is convenient. I tell the maid that I consent, and go meet them together with Arisa. I've already told all the informations about the princess and her companions to Arisa beforehand.

"Sir Pendragon, I want to thank you for saving me from the dangerous situation in this occasion."

Menea Rumooku is a princess of one of the small kingdom bordering the dukedom. She's 16 years old. Level 9, she has summoning magic skill. It's quite rare. Her waist-long loosely-waved pink hair, and emerald colored pupils are followed with chiseled face that's not too deep. Her height is only around 150cm, but her waist is thin, and her breasts are big. They're C-cup on the brink of D-cup. If our standings aren't different, I'd have wanted to court this beautiful girl in 2-3 years.

It was originally planned that she, as the third princess, was to marry the prince of a small kingdom, but the kingdom of her partner was destroyed by the weaselkins and the prince had died. Therefore, for the sake of meeting her next marriage partner, she's going to study in the the place where there are a lot of Shiga kingdom nobles, Kayou Royal Academy. Of course the academy is located in the royal capital.

From the knights and subordinates that have accompanied her until here, half have died from the demon attack, and the remaining three are being healed of their serious injuries in Tenion temple.

The wise-looking woman past 20 years old wearing civil official-like clothes who's standing behind the princess seems to be her attendant, she's called Poni-san. Her level is 7, her skills are [Negotiation], [Spy], and [Etiquette]. The spy skill is too suspicious.

So far so good, the problem is her black-haired attendants.

First, the boy gives his name. He has longish hair even though he's a boy,

with biggish black eyes, he's 10 years old. His level is 1. His skill is only [Arithmetic]. His height is 132 cm. It's slightly lower than the average. He's the so-called [Girly boy], you can only see a girl when you look at his face. He's wearing girl clothes too.
Arisa can't leave it alone, so he must be a true boy. In fact, she's muttering, "Not bad, it'd be nice if the hair is shorter", beside me.

"I'm Aoi Haruka. Thank you for the help."

I wonder if it's Aoi Ryo or Haruka?

"I'm Yui Akasaki. I work as an idol. Onii-san, do you recognize my face?"

Akasaki Yui? She has shoulder-length black hair, and black pupils, she's 13 years old. Her level is 2. Her skill is only [Acting]. There are no Singing and Dancing (skills)? Her height is 149 cm. Her breasts are about B-cup. It's probably quite big for her age. However, even though she says that she's an idol, I've never seen her. I peep at Arisa, it looks like she doesn't know either.

"Yui, you're being rude to chevalier-sama. Speak the words properly."

Poni-san rebukes Yui's language, but it seems she doesn't look like she's going to change it.
With lip reading skill, I see that she's been speaking in Japanese all this time, but what I've heard is in Shiga kingdom language. Poni-san tells me later that with the translation ring the girl is wearing, her words are translated to Shiga kingdom.

It can be understand from the two's name that they're Japanese--they should be transported people, but they don't even have the [Self-Status] skill that any reincarnated or transported person should have according to Arisa, let alone unique skills. There's a possibility that they could hide it like me, but they might be the never-before-seen fourth type.

"So, which Japan are you coming from? Is it like this child's Great Rich Japan Empire? Or like my Southern Japan Federation? You can't be from the Northern Japan Republic right?"

I see, so it's come to this.

Poker Face skill is doing a good job today too.

7-15. Various Japanese People

Satou's here. I'm lumping the Japanese people together, but from color of udon to dialect, there are various differences in the east, west, south and north of Japan. I wonder if it's because of the information-oriented society, those special characteristics have been fading away in recent years, it's quite sad.

◇

The princess' entourages, Yui and Aoi pondered if me, who's called Satou, and has black hair and black eyes, is a Japanese. It doesn't seem that they're aware of Arisa's name.

The girl before me, Yui, is summoned from Southern Japan Federation in a country separated to north and south. The kind of country's setting that's often found in fictitious military stories. It seems to be a real country from what she's said, I guess I shouldn't say 'setting' out loud.
However, I've thought that I could easily go home if I just go to Saga empire, but if there are parallel worlds, I have to rethink my plan. Although from the start, I don't intend to go back until after the livelihood of Arisa, Liza and the others are guaranteed here, so it's fine.

"By Japan, do you mean the illustrious country referred by hero-sama?"
"Satou-san isn't from one?"
"My house has always given the name of the eldest son, Satou, for generations long. It's said that our ancestor is a Saga empire hero, but there's no hero called Satou if we trace back the generations of Saga empire's hero, so it's probably a fake story."

This setting is finally used. I thought that I wouldn't have the chance to use it even though I had prepared it. Supported with deception skill, it seems that Yui believes me.

Arisa speaks to Yui from my side.

"Hey, what kind of country is Southern Japan Federation?"
"Hm? It's an amazing country you know, there are mass of irons flying in the air, a lot of them fly until the heaven, it's bright even during the night."
"Hee, are there a lot of delicious food?"
"Fufuhn~, right eh, there are a lot of things that you've never eaten before, like--"

Apparently, it seems to be a different Japan than Arisa's own. When they bring up the subject to the Aoi boy, he's also started talking about various matters.

While listening to the three's conversation, I talk to princess Menea.
They wouldn't have come here just to make sure if I'm another Japanese.

"Your highness, I've thought that only Saga empire can summon heroes, are these girls taking refuge from the empire?"
"No, it's different. These girls were summoned by our kingdom."
"P, princess. E,err, chevalier-sama, please keep the talk just now a secret, please."

I didn't think that she would answer frankly.

Still, it's not good to disclose such information to nobles from other kingdom right. Miss Poni hurriedly stopped the princess, but the essential point had been said.

Of course, I don't intend to tell this to anyone, but I'll bully them a little and get more informations.

"I really want to keep this a secret, but since this is concerning the matter of national defense, I have no choice but to tell this to my master and the royalties."

Poni-san who thinks that my statements is really reasonable, moans with, "au au", and cannot find any points to oppose it. It looks like she's not an excellent politician like Arisa and Nina-san. If it's those two, they would immediately try to bargain until I could be kept silent.

"Ufufu, Satou-sama, please don't bully us too much, you will keep it a secret."

The princess declared so confidently.
I wonder what's her basis?

◇

"Satou-sama is a retainer of the neighboring baron Muno territory's lord aren't you."
"Even though I'm a retainer (of a baron), I'm of the lowest ranked honorary Chevalier."

Right now, I'm alone with the princess at a garden's arbor. The place can be seen from the room we've just been earlier. Thickets are hiding the place we're sitting, so people can't see us.

When she invited me to a walk, I thought that she was going to talk something that Yui and Aoi shouldn't hear, but I was surprised that she even left Poni-san in the room.

When we arrived at the arbor, I took a seat in front of her, but she deliberately went to sit beside me.
We're not talking about the summoning, but only about me. It looks like she's heard a lot of rumor about me when she was visiting her knights, so she becomes interested in me.

It can't be that she's seducing me?

--Not. I cut off the momentary convenient imagination of mine. Even though it's a small kingdom, there's no reason why the kingdom's princess would fall for me.

Let's return back the topic to about summoning.

"It seems that her highness believes that I would keep it a secret, why is that?"

"Even if I come from a small kingdom, I'm still a princess. I can discern people who's trying to gain favors."

Hoo? That is amazing.

"I don't feel that Satou-sama is going to make use of those girls and me. The reason why you bullied us was because you were trying to get information from me right?"

Yes, that's exactly right.
Then, let's frankly ask her.

"Your highness."
"Menea."

Taking my momentum, the princess overlaps her word with mine. Your face is close princess.

"Please call me Menea. Satou-sama."
"I understand, Menea-sama."

She seems satisfied with me calling her name, and shortly goes back to sit. She doesn't seem to care that I use 'sama'.

"Is Rumooku kingdom able to summon Japanese people since olden days?"
"No, the one who summoned them was my aunt, the king's litle sister, her highness Yuriko."

She casually used 'was' huh. Additionally, "Yuriko", means that she was a reincarnated person huh?

"It's just as you've guessed. Her highness Yuriko was a reincarnated Japanese person. She said that she was murdered by a thug when she was an elementary schooler in her previous life. She declared to the people that she met the god when she was reincarnating; she should have been revered as a saintess, but due to her ominous colored hair and pupils, no one believed her words."

Ominous color huh, it must be violet like Arisa.

"In our country, the direct line of the royal family who had pink hair like me was regarded the most, so her situation was difficult."

This is something that I hear later, but the reason why pink hair is regarded the most is because when her ancestor meets the ancestor king Yamato, the ancestor king declares, "Pink hair is the treasure of the world. Hereafter, Shiga kingdom will enter eternal non-aggression treaty with this country."
Isn't Yamato-san a person of the olden days? I somehow imagine the person to be like someone from Akihabara....

"Her highness Yuriko asked for three wishes, [Power to Connect Worlds], [Eternal Youth], and [Beauty], to the god. However, I don't know if she's angered the god, Beauty is the only thing she doesn't get."

It's like Lulu's case I guess. She couldn't have imagined that the world had different standard of looks.
However, I feel like the other two skills are too different from [Power to Connect Worlds]. Did she intend to go back and forth between the previous world and here?

"When she used her [Power to Connect Worlds] for the first time, she summoned a monster that massacred nearby maids."

Afterwards, to see if it could be used for military purpose, she used [Power to Connect Worlds] after preparing the knights to stand by, but nothing came out beside one rabbit.

"Just as that happened, weaselkin magicians visited the castle while carrying a certain item."

Weasels again huh. They're active behind the scene like the demons.

"They knew about her highness [Power to Connect Worlds] from somewhere. They tried to sell the king the magic tool they had brought along, saying that it could be used with her highness' power to summon heroes."

At first the king showed his disapproval, but he got persuaded by the skillful

talks of the weaselkins. It was also immediately after the annihilation of the neighboring small kingdom by the weaselkins, so he couldn't exactly refuse them.

And then, Japanese people began to get summoned, but--

"Among all the Japanese people who had been summoned, no one was as strong or had unique skills like the hero."

There's also possibility of them hiding their ability, but the princess denies while saying that it's absolutely impossible since there's a curse that won't let them disobey the summoner. Unlike the king's little sister, no one met the god. It's the same pattern as me.

"By no one, that means there aren't just the two girls?"
"Yes, there are total eight people who had been summoned."

The first and the second summoned ones began to scream eccentrically immediately after they had been summoned and tried to get close to the royalties, so they were executed by the guard knights. They might had just tried to understand their situation while speaking in Japanese language, pitiable.

The third one is a man in his late teens, he slipped out of the castle the day he was given the translation ring and seemed to have died in the forest, eaten by monsters. When the soldiers had caught up to him, the monsters were devouring him, and only his hand with the translation ring on the finger was left.

The fourth one is a man in his 30s. He attacked a noble who was on an inspection during his battle training, and got executed. After living peacefully in Japan, he had to undergone military training every day to the point of vomiting blood, he went mad.

When I overlap his situation with mine, a chill run downs my spine. If I were to be left alone in a wasteland without unique skills, I would probably end up similar to him.

The fifth one is a woman on the later half of her twenties, after she was

given translation ring and explained of her situation, she committed suicide on the evening of that day.

"Why did she kill herself?"
"We honestly told her that there was no way to return her home."
"Is there none? Couldn't she just use that [Power to Connect Worlds] again?"
"The magic tool Motara from the weaselkins did help connect to [Parallel World Japan], but the connected world was always different every time. They didn't know why it could not connect to the same world."

The princess is talking detachedly, but when she's talking about the weaselkins, her words get a bit harsh.

"And then, the sixth was Aoi, and the seventh was Yui."

She cuts her words there.

"When the last, eighth person was summoned, a senior demon attacked the castle that day, her highness Yuriko and the people involved with the summoning were all killed. The eighth summoned person was abducted by the demon, and half of my country was burned in half jest by the demon."

It seems Oyugock dukedom provided funds to help rebuild the kingdom. It was the duke who want Yui and Aoi to go with her to study together at Oritsu academy.

And then, it seems that the upper nobles of Rumooku and Shiga kingdom have known about this.

I finally understand the reason why she could declare "I will keep it a secret" now. There's no meaning anyway if the people I would report already know. There's a high possibility that baron Muno doesn't know about this, but as a lord he is, he's a legitimate senior noble.

I'm bothered with the whereabout of that eighth person, but I wonder why she's talking about it like this?

"Reason is it? There was an oracle. It was prophesied that I would meet my

destined person in this kingdom. And I think that you are my destined person."

Umm, I don't understand what you mean, you know?
Are you sharing your secret to your destined person or something?

She drew her body closer to me while spinning her words together with entranced sigh. Her hands which she's put on my upper arm are trembling.

The stare from her passionate blue eyes draw men in. She's a bit young, but I'm charmed by her alluring gaze and small gestures. Above all, the abundant swelling that are being pressed on my upper arm are nice. It might be fine to get swept away by the atmosphere like this, and when I think about it a bit, she's attractive.

However, I wonder why. Reasons returns to her eyes even though they have been so passionate.

As if being lured by that, my interest also rapidly declines.

These following three messages are displayed a lot in queue of my log.

>Mind Magic: Resisted Calm Field
>Mind Magic: Resisted <<Impossible Cage>>
>Mind Magic: Resisted Frank Principle (Flat Rule)

It was Arisa huh.

It seems that she's used her unique skill that's finally available again, Never Give Up.

The evidence is the, [Mind Magic: Failed in Resisting Frank Principle (Flat Rule)], that are in the log.

I'll tell her GJ this time. Since I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere. I really do have to play around to vent out once in a while after all.

7-16. Gururian City Night

Satou's here. During the time of bubble economy long ago, it seemed that it was normal to treat your lover with full course meal in every memorial day. I don't think that I'm lucky to grow up during the recession, but it looks like people who've been in the good times have their own shares of problem too.

◇

"Well then, everyone, please enjoy the specialties of Gugurian."

The viceroy says so signaling the start of the banquet.

The people in this dining room are the viceroy, his wife and his retainers, gentlemen and ladies--who are of course nobles with peerages. The guests are princess Menea, and Poni-san who acts as her escort,
and also lady Karina and me. The influential people in the city are only invited when it's a buffet party.
By the way, only adults are allowed to participate in the banquet and party, their children aren't.

The dining table is decorated with flowers, and two maids accompany each guest. The tablewares are silver knives, spoons and forks. Beside the knife that looks like an extremely common dagger, the spoon and the fork are like the ones used in the previous world. There is only one set of the tablewares for each plate, but it gets exchanged with new ones when you've finished your meal it seems.
The room is lit with magic light. It's not with magic tools, but a magician is putting out light balls. That should be the case considering magic balls are occasionally added from the corner the room.

Wine-like liquor is poured into the glasses. This is the first time I've ever seen glasses as containers since I come here. It seems to be famous products of the dukedom called Oak Glass. According to lady Karina's story,

there's a life-sized glass mirror in the women waiting room.

Lady Karina's clothes looks so gorgeous, you wouldn't think that they're made in hurry. I'm the one who pay for it, but it's scary to look at the bill. The clothes have spaciously shown neckline, and the demonic--I mean, emphasized breasts, it's also not only decorated with silver and golden threads, but even gems are mounted in every important places. It's probably not preferable for the invitee to wear clothes that are too gaudy, but since the viceroy's wife is wearing even gaudier dresses, so it should be alright. Since the topic about sense of beauty could be controversial, I don't really want to talk about it, but it's also 'Peacock' in this world too huh, I'll leave it at that.

The first plate that I've assumed to be cold from the beginning is light green soup. It's delicious even though it's cold, potatoes soup-like.

Starting from that, various plates with dishes like meat pudding, boiled trout, pilaf-like dish, baked pheasant, and fillet meat steak are presented out in turns. Aren't there too many main plates?
Regardless of the main course, side dishes like vegetables, and entremet are put on different plates. Breads are also served in a basket, this is the first time I've seen ones that aren't black breads. They're not puffing hot, but it's been a long time since I've eaten white breads.

I want to use chopsticks when I'm eating the trout, but the nobles nearby seem to have got used to it, they break the trout and eat it without problem. However, half of them who aren't able to do it well are assisted by the maids behind by leaving only the white meat for the nobles. Diligent maids are too wonderful.

Of course, I ask for help too.

Apparently she's an inexperienced maid, I could hear, "Ah", and, "B, bone-san, please don't bring it here.", such slightly fun screams from behind. Since she said it in low voice, guests who don't have attentive ears skill probably can't hear it. I did not think that I would be this glad for getting attentive ears skill.

I'd like to have Liza eat the pheasant dish. Let's buy it in the market, and

make the same dish. I have to thank the chefs for the good food in the kitchen, and get them to teach me delicious recipes later!

The overall volume of food is too much, though it's not like I can't eat them all, but since it seems to be normal to leave leftovers, I'm relieved. Even in glutinous Japan, I don't think I've ever left this much. The gormandizer lady Karina eat them all up.

During the banquet, people around me are having conversations while eating slowly, and it's unexpectedly difficult for people who can't eat slowly. Moreover, lady Karina is too engrossed in eating she tends to forget about the conversation, and has a hard time to follow it. Since she's unfamiliar with this position, it can't be helped. If I haven't followed Arisa's recommendation and got taught of etiquette by well-informed maid-san beforehand, I might show some shameful behaviors too.

Arisa and the others are on eating tour around Gururian city as scheduled. I'm expecting their result enthusiastically since they would absolutely find shops with delicious cooked rice.

The last dessert isn't gururian (ohagi), but sweetened chestnut. It's called gold sugar, and seems to be promoted at Gururian confectionery. It's really very tasty.

After the dinner, we move to a different room to have pleasant chats. Men and women are in separate rooms. The talks are frank since there are only same sex.

Since a gentleman at the prime of his life who claims to be baron Muno's childhood friend is talking, I don't get left behind alone. The baron is like that since long ago after all.
I got uncomfortable when the topic changes to silver masked hero who has appeared in Seryuu city and Muno city, but the impressions are generally favorable. 'Maybe his true nature is someone who has served the previous Saga empire's hero', such theory is prominent. If he's the predecessor hero's friend, shouldn't he be around 70-90 years old then? I want to retort with that, but I restrain myself.

Since I want to change the topic, I try to talk about the story of the young

nobles at the dwarves' hometown.

The atmosphere gets a bit heavy since it's not really a good topic to talk about, but I get some informations. There are hundreds of noble houses in the dukedom alone, and more than 100 young nobles don't succeed their houses and become commoners each year. There is no strict rule that mandates nobles to fall and become commoners, but if one of their sibling inherit the house then they have to leave. If they're minors then they'd be still under care of their parents and remain in the house for the time being.

The magic swords search seem to be vain struggles of the young nobles who don't want to become commoners, even if each of their houses issues prohibition for it, there are always someone who breaks it.
It seems that entering into the duke's imperial guard is quite an honor, and during the service, they'd be treated as temporary nobles and the fall into commoners is postponed. The person with talent could be conferred with medal and become a honorary knight.

◇

When we get back to the banquet, lady Karina and me are invited to a tea break together by the viceroy's son. He's not actually the viceroy's legitimate son, so there's no problem even if I refuse him. However, there's something that interest me so I decide to accept the invitation.
Lady Karina is also going to accompany me. I wonder why? She's being meek and quiet today unlike her usual behavior. The thing that's different from the usual her is that she's not wearing Raka now huh? If she was always like this, I wouldn't have avoided her.

"Nice to meet you, sir Pendragon. Thank you very much for accepting my sudden invitation."
"Thank you for the invitation. The daughter of the viceroy is famous for her wide knowledge. I'd like to meet her once at least."

With my reply, the girl and the boys that follow her harden. She's wearing boys clothes after all, and the clothes matches her well, so she really looks like a feminine boy.

"H, how did you know?"
"I understand from the frame. There are various differences between men and women. The way to distinct it is a secret of my house, so it breaks my heart that I have to tell you I cannot show it."

I think casual talk matches her better, although I don't think that's how she naturally is. The bluff about frames is something I know from the net.
They are the same girl and boys with matching uniforms who have been watching the fight back in the noon. The other boys are children of the viceroy's retainers. Looks like they're children of the nobles from the banquet earlier.

I've accepted the invitation not because they're powerful nobles. It's because they're students of young division of Oritsu royal academy.
Princess Menea that I've met yesterday seem to be studying in the advanced division of Oritsu royal academy.
I probably would visit Oritsu academy to gather information someday, so I'll try to have connections even a bit here.

"Satou-sama is amazing even though you're so young. How are you able to be that skillful in swordplay and magic?"

The daughter of the viceroy introduces herself as Ririna, she's fervently speaking about how amazing my fight with the demon is. At first she calls me, "Chevalier Pendragon", or, "Sir Pendragon", but somehow it's changed to "Chevalier Satou", and then, "Satou-sama".
When her way of calling changed, the line of sights of lady Karina and the boys that follow Ririna became dangerous. Leaving aside lady Karina, it's not my plan to be hated by the followers, so I take care as to keep my distance from lady Ririna.
Their attitudes quickly changes when I verbally promise to teach them the basic of magic someday. I don't know when is that someday, so I write it in the memo so that I won't forget it.

The viceroy's office term is only for five years, but since her father is a capable person, it has been decided that he would move to Kwoka city afterward.

◇

"Satou-sama, you've promised to teach me about magic! Please wake up."

The figure of us sleeping together in a bed spreads in front of lady Ririna who has come into the room without knocking. Moreover, everyone is wearing pajama that Arisa has made for seven people, it seems to look like underwear from the eyes of the people here.

"Satou-sama, a, au, d, dirty desu!!"

It seems to be too stimulating for the 13 years old her.
And then a lady maid who serves her comes to apologize for the impoliteness, and closes the door.

"What was that?"
"The viceroy's daughter, lady Ririna, 13 years old. She's a talented girl who's attending the young division of Oritsu royal academy."

Arisa's voice is flat. Mia who usually sleeps in also looks at me harshly while looking sleepy. Liza turns around and goes back to sleep again indifferently. Pochi and Tama are tossing around on the bed. Defeated by their cuteness, I pat their stomaches while lying. The two are letting out comfortable sounds from their throats.

"You there, stop flirting."
"Nn, seiza."

Arisa and Mia also take seiza postures and look straight to my face.
I wonder what is this? This 'husband who has been blamed for cheating'-like composition?

"I haven't done anything shameful you know? I got to know her when she invited me together with lady Karina to a tea break. I promised to teach her about magic someday, didn't she just want to do it immediately?"
"Gunununu."
"Mwu."

Lulu is also looking here with teary eyes, but it seems she's been persuaded somehow.
After breakfast, the mood became strange since lady Ririna and princess Menea had come intruding, but I got pass through it somehow.

I prioritize in teaching magic for lady Ririna and her followers, and the princess amiably concedes. Arisa said, "There's no fool who would make enemies of influential nobles of a large country." Looks like viceroys are amazing.
Even though I said 'teaching magic', I just asked each of them to perform magic, sensed it with magic perception, and pointed out their weakness and strength with the knowledge from the magic theory books. They thank me greatly somehow, but I think anyone would be able to do this much. They're probably happy because it's the words from [A magician who's defeated a demon].

◇

Since princess Menea was absent when I came to meet her after the teaching, I went to the town with Arisa and the others. I wasn't able to resist the appeal of cooked white rice and grilled fish.

"Fufuhn, the way to cook white rice has been properly mastered! By Lulu!"

It seems she was taught by the chef from the restaurant they visited yesterday.

"They willingly teach you huh."
"It's give and take! I traded it with tempura recipe!"

I see, after a while, we could eat tempura in this city when we visit it again huh. GJ Arisa.
I make promise with Lulu to have her teach me how to cook white rice later. Of course, I intend for Lulu to make it first. It's so that Lulu's effort doesn't get to waste, but anyone would yearn for freshly cooked rice from a beautiful girl right.

I bought [Float] scroll from the magic shop. I did not bought the other scrolls since I had them already.

When we get back to the viceroy mansion, maid-san tells us that they've booked us seats for the ship that will depart to the dukedom capital tomorrow. A carriage that carries five sacks of rice and one sack of glutinous rice ordered by Arisa has arrived. There's one sack of adzuki beans too. You've bought too much Arisa.

When we are preparing for the departure, princess Menea comes over.
I've thought that she's going to continue the talk about heroes from yesterday, but she's just confirming my contact address. I tell her that we're in the middle of a journey to the labyrinth city, and I promise her that I will send a letter to Oritsu royal academy addressed for princess Menea after we have decided the place to stay there.
This is the first time I'm going to exchange letter with a beautiful girl--No wait, I've already promised once with Zena-san. I should send a letter to Zena-san.

Lastly, I check on one thing I've forgotten to ask the princess yesterday.
When was the eighth person kidnapped?

"More than one month ago. Do you remember the day when many meteors fall from the sky? It was the day before that."

That kidnapped eighth person wasn't me right? Right?

7-17. Ship Travel

Satou's here. I imagined that Europe have prejudice against octopus which they call devil fish, but I was surprised when I heard that it was eaten normally in Italy and Spain. Akashiyaki is delicious, but I prefer normal takoyaki.

◇

I'm waving my hands on top of the departing ship. It's not only princess Menea and her escorts that have come to see us off, but even the viceroy couple and miss Ririna.

There were imprudent young nobles and hooligans that they had hired aiming for Liza's spear waiting in the harbor, but the viceroy soldiers skilfully arrested them before they could cause harm to us. It seemed miss Karina's maids had notified the viceroy beforehand after they heard about some disturbing rumors.
The nobles had probably seen Liza's spear during the fight with the demon yesterday, but they were really confident if they thought they could go against her even after seeing that fight.

I want to leave miss Karina too if possible, but my reputation would become bad if I do leave my employer's daughter, so I give up.

"Fufufuhn, you've raised and collected flags of the new character huh! She should just disappear after this."

New character.... Please don't liken a person with characters. Today's Arisa is a bit dark. Is she still minding about the things at the arbor yesterday?

Last night, before we slept, Arisa and I exchanged informations about our Japans, and about 70% of it matched. I had thought that she liked minor animes, but in Arisa's Japan, they were super popular works that even non-Otaku knew.

"Are you still thinking about the eighth person?"

Arisa who seems to be worried about me that has lost in thought calls out.

Yesterday, I was a bit upset, but even if I'm the eighth, there was no particular merit or demerit, so I decided not to mind about it. Since the reincarnated person who could do summoning has died, a situation where more Japanese people overflows here is unlikely anyway.
For the time being, I've told the princess that the summoned hero of Saga empire could be sent back to his original world. I'll pray for the possibility of Yui and Aoi going back to their worlds would increase even for a bit.

Arisa pokes-pokes my head lightly, and we go together to Pochi and the others who are clamoring on the bow while looking at the water surface.

◇

"I've cleared another thing that I've always wanted to do in the previous life～"

Arisa spreads her arms on the bow while I'm supporting her waist. It looks like a scene from a famous western movie. I knew the title since it was a masterpiece, but unfortunately I had never watched it.

"Umm, chevalier-sama, it's dangerous so, could you...."

The area of the bow we are in is actually off-limit, but I unreasonably ask to enter it.
Since the lone tour guide who's taking care of us is looking troubled, I take Arisa who seems satisfied back to the general deck.

This ship's deck is wide enough to hold four carriages. Although since there are other things like the masts, it can only hold two in actual. There's only our wagon right now. This ship consists of three layers, the top one has the captain's cabin and our guest rooms. Miss Karina and her maids are in different room of course. The other two layers are for domestic animals like

the horses, cargo room, and the sailors' rooms.

I was worried that everyone would get seasick for their first ship voyage, but beside miss Karina's maids who are downed, all other members are fine. Everyone is saying that it's far better than the vibration on the wagon. Let's give some motion-sickness medicines to the maid-san later.

It's 300 kilometers away until the capital, but since we're using a ship chartered from the viceroy this time, we would reach it in just two days. It would take 3-4 days if it was a general ship, since they'd need to make stops at the cities along the way.

"It's boring desuwa."
"Karina-sama, how about exploring the ship's interior together with Pochi and the others?"

Karina-sama barged in when I was relaxing on the sofa that the tour guide had prepared on the deck.
There are only Liza and me here. The other members have gone exploring. I didn't think that even Lulu would also go, but since it was the first time she had boarded such large ship, it couldn't be helped. I'm the only one who's sitting on the sofa. Since there were three seats, I encouraged Liza to also sit, but she stood obstinately like a sentry and wouldn't sit.

I don't think that even miss Karina would try to pick a fight in this kind of place, but since I'm absorbed in map searching, I drive her away.

"My, even though such beautiful girl is visiting you, you immediately send her away?"
"I have no such intention, would you like to take a seat?"

I'm saying thing that I don't mean to.
I get irritated at miss Karina, but I don't show it on my face.

"So, would you not sign the letter from consul Nina?"
"I thought I had given the letter of refusal on the other day?"

Nina-san's letter was a request for me to become [Special Liaison Officer] from baron Muno territory. In short, I have to coax influential nobles in the

dukedom to invest in baron Muno territory. As the compensation it was written that the honorary part of my peerage would be taken out, but since it was not worth it, I declined. If I carelessly accept it, I'm afraid that I'd get led around until I'm made to marry miss Karina.

"Why is it? If you become a chevalier, your children could inherit the peerage you know?"
"Even the honorary knight that I have now is too excessive for me. I don't think of anything beyond that."

Miss Karina looks dissatisfied with me who's not getting into it. Please stop inflating your cheeks like a child. The maid--err~ was it Pina-san?--is warning her as it's unbecoming of a lady.
Right at then, Pochi and Tama who have finished their exploring dive in.

"I'm home~.""Nano desu!"
"Yes, welcome home."

I gently catch the two and make them sit on the seats at both of my sides. Since they look thirsty, I advise them to drink the fruit water on the side table. Arisa comes back slightly late.
Mia who has realized that my sides are already occupied clings from behind the sofa. Please stop rustling my hair.

"You're all getting clingy during the noon!"

Miss Karina accused so.
How rude! We're just a bit intimate.

Miss Karina is stamping the ground with her feet, but it seems she's discrete enough as not to utter, "Let's fight desuwa."

◇

"Look look! It's mermaid, mermaid!"

Why did you say it twice.

I look at where Arisa is pointing, they're certainly mermaids. The AR indicates that they're finmen tribe (Mermaid). It looks like they're aquatic demi-humans. There are also other tribe like fishmen or gillmen.

It seems the mermaids are gathering shellfish and prawn, and carry it to small boats with humans on it. It's completely different, but they remind me of ama-san divers doing cormorant fishing.

I look at the people on the small boat, the tour guide who has noticed it calls the small boats here.
Since the story advances into buying of aquatic products, I go with Lulu to the ship's side.

The line-ups are shellfish that are as big as a tray, lobster-sized shrimps, and octopus with two meter long tentacles. There shouldn't be octopus in fresh water, but I guess I shouldn't bring real world common knowledge to a parallel world.
I buy shrimps for everyone's shares, several shellfish, and three octopus. It seems octopus are rarely eaten by people, the tour guide looks awfully surprised. It's delicious you know?

"Octopus~?"
"This guy, nano desu."

Pochi and Tama catch the octopus that has ran away from the bucket, but they're having a hard time with the tentacles coiling around them.

It seems Pochi is irritated with the tentacles that just won't come off, she begins biting on it.
It might be delicious, but please stop biting it raw.

Tama has escaped somehow, and pricks the octopus that coils around Pochi with her claws. Stop enjoying it and help Pochi. Well, since her harassed behavior looks cute, I do understand. However, I should help her soon.

"Satou."

Mia is calling me with pitiful voice from behind, when I turn around, she's

also become a victim of the octopus. Leaving aside Pochi, Mia who gets entangled by the octopus' tentacles feels immoral-like, no good. Arisa also says, "Erofu is here." while helping her.
Lulu also helps, and the tentacles on Mia are torn off. Nana and Liza are helping Pochi.

"Sticky."

Mia tells her displeasure while looking really pitiful.
I ask the tour guide to draw water.

I hear Pochi screams, "Please help nano desu" behind. When I look behind, there are Pochi and Nana who have become black from the octopus' ink. Liza and Tama seemed to have avoided it.

I put up a partitioning screen, and the three octopus' victims are taking baths behind it. I put Air Curtain outside the screen so that it won't get stripped off. Rather than being troubled from them being seen, it's more so that they don't catch cold.

Mia and Pochi are going out of the screen to dry their bodies, but since there are other people's eyes, I tell them to wipe it with their own clothes and push them inside the screen. That's why it's inevitable I see naked body of Nana at that time. I have absolutely nothing to feel guilty about.

"Your lips, they're grinning."
"How rude."

I unintentionally put my hand on my lip from Arisa's words.

I've seen good things today, I decide to cook the octopus dish.
I ask the tour guide to borrow the kitchen. It's only inside the ship, and it's small. It might be better to cook it on the ship's deck with magic tools. I had made Heat Plate, referencing from Light Heat Plate, but since the only one who could regulate the temperature was me, it rarely got used during the camping.

Unfortunately, the only octopus dish that I could think of is boiled octopus sashimi that would fit in a bar, or vinegared one. I've thought of making

takoyaki, but since I don't know how to make stock soup for the dough, I give up. Let's research it next time.
Since I feel that the rice that Lulu is cooking would slightly fail, I put up ingredients for making octopus pilaf. I soothe Lulu who's depressed, I don't expect her to make splendid cooked rice on her first try.

I ask Liza's and Nana's help to bring it to the deck, and we're having lunch under the blue sky. It's generally popular, but Pochi looks a bit disappointed, probably because it's not meat. I'd like you to endure since they'd be suspicious of the origin if we have grilled meat on the ship.

Since there's going to be a town near the place where we're anchoring this evening, maybe I should go shopping with a small boat there.

Tama and Liza are wildly eating the grilled shrimps without peeling it. Maybe because it looks really delicious, Miss Karina begins to mimic them, but Pina-san the maid scolds her. The other two maids are engrossed with the meal, they don't even act as miss Karina caretakers. I wonder if the medicine is effective, miss Erina the maid who has been looking like she'd die this morning is stuffing her mouth full with the octopus pilaf.

It was worthwhile in making so much food since there are many gluttons here.

When I'm searching for [Short Horn] at the capital during the meal, I find more than 20 of it. I pray that the capital doesn't get destroyed until the ship arrives.

I wish that Hayuna, her child and the workshop of the viscount Shimen are safe.

7-18. Ship Travel (2)

Satou's here. I imagine gorgeous passenger ship when I hear 'Ship travel', but I've only ever ride a nighttime ferry. Since I mostly slept, I could only remember some random theme song that remained in my ears.

◇

"Bird~?"
"Bird-san nano desu!"

A birdman who's flying near the water surface as if gliding passes over the ship.
Pochi and Tama are waving their hands to the point as if it'd get torn off. It seems the birdman is also giving a service, he makes several turns and do a full revolution before flying away.

I'm afraid that the two will fall since they lean forward too much while waving their hands, but since Liza seizes the girdle, it's probably alright. Even if they fall, there's [Float] that I've learned recently so it's fine, but there's no need for them to fall in the first place.

It's basically a leisure on the ship.

Yesterday, the ship was attacked by two aquatic monsters, but before we could go out, the gillmen soldiers who were escorting the ship cleaned it up. There was also a pirate group, river version, that was going to attack on the river branch, but I attacked them with Short Stun from afar, and their boat got capsized, the end.

Since it's generally peaceful like that, I continue practicing signal magic with Nana like before.
Mia and Arisa look dissatisfied, though they're not being hindrances because I persuade them that having someone that can receive the signal anytime is important. This person is being a nuisance instead.

"You're all clingy again this early in the day!"
"Karina-dono, I've thought that it's normal for married humans couple to get clingy? Besides, the two seem to be doing training for receiving signal magic. In my humble opinion, you should not disturb them."

Raka remonstrated Karina who was picking a quarrel. As expected of magic creature. It understands that we're doing signal magic.

"I want to do training too!"
"Since Karina-sama has Raka-dono, there is no need for training. I'll contact Raka-dono if anything happen."

Good grief, if lady Karina is going to be my practice partner, my line of sight would be at her breasts no doubt. Arisa and Mia would say [Seiza] again.

"Right, right, it's unnecessary for young lady Karina who has the convenient magic tool. Now then, it's Arisa-chan's turn."

Arisa declares so while breathing heavily. What's this, card game!
When lady Karina was intruding, that Arisa took my short cane and did something on the deck's corner, it seems she was using [Signal] magic. The reason why she was breathing heavily was probably because used [Signal] even though she didn't have nature magic skill. She's a rash girl like always.

Mia claps her hands when she sees Arisa, takes a short cane from my bag, chant nature magic spell, and casts [Signal]. Mia is following Arisa huh.
It seems that Mia has successfully casted the magic, but far from breathing heavily, she falls from anemia. I was going to put her on the cabin to sleep, but she insisted to be here and slept on my lap.
Lulu who's beside the tea set looks at Mia enviously. I don't think it's something that warrant such envy. I feel that lady Karina's expression looks like Lulu, but I ignore it.

"Hey, I've struggled to be able to be the receiver, so start the training~."
"Okay, first, let's see the receiver's state using [Signal]. Give me your hands."
"Uy~."

Come to think of it, it's been awhile since I join hand with Arisa. They're

small. I'm squishing it. When I'm playing with the small hands that have nothing to do with the training, Arisa is letting out strange voices like, "Au", or "Iyahn". She seems to be shy, like always, I don't understand the point that would make Arisa shy.
Since Mia scratches my knee while irritated, I stop playing around and go back to the training.

"First, it's a brief signal. Then, next is long signal."
"Okay, I know, I know."
"I know."

Oh, Mia is also participating huh. Please don't overdo it if your anemia is painful.

"Then, from now on is the real thing. Activating [Signal]."
"Hoi."
"Nn."

I've tried it for many times, but they can't receive it as well as Nana after all. At that time, Pochi and Tama who have been looking at the birdman on the ship's broadside come back.

"Pizza~?" "Lap pillow nano desu~."

It seems Tama and the others are still affected by Arisa who eats 10 pizzas when I make mock pizza the other day. Looks like it's still stuck on Tama, she still says pizza while pointing at my lap.
Maybe they want to mimic Mia who's sleeping on my lap, they gather both hands on the opposite knee and lie on it face down. No. That's not how you do sleeping on the laps.

Since the two who look at me poking Arisa's and Mia's hands say that they want to do it too, I make them spread their hands in line and poke it too.

I try to send various signals' interval and strength.

Ton, ton.

Piku, piku.

Oh?

This time, I try to send the signals without poking their hands with my finger.

Piko, piko.

Pochi's and Tama's ears are twitching matching the signal, they lean their heads while looking puzzled.

"Pochi, raise your hand if you receive my signal."
"Roger nano desu."

Ton, swoosh.
Silent. ...Ton, swoosh.
This is a bit interesting. However, it seems that she could only grasp short wave signal.

"Next, Tama okay."
"I'll manage somehow sir~"

That's wrong.
She got the vocabularies that Arisa had taught her mixed. She must have wanted to say, "Aye aye sir.".

Ton, swish.
Ton, swiswish.

You don't have to take strange poses when you get it.

Looks like Tama can receive both types of signals, but strangely her sensitivity is weaker than Pochi's, the range of signal strength that she could receive is narrow. That reminds me, Tama did find magic traps in the labyrinth eh.
I don't know if it's due to her race characteristic or her individual ability, but she's quite reliable.

With this, I could communicate with them even if we're separated. At the

very least, the signal could be received from end to end of the ship, I'll check on the range when we get down from the ship.
I decide on several urgent patterns at once. I'm worried Pochi and Tama wouldn't be able to remember signal that's too complex, but Arisa proposes to make Tama talks the signal out loud to Arisa, and so I agree with it. Afterward, Arisa would decipher the Morse signal.

I've thought that it's quiet, but it looks like Karina has shut her room and sleep while sulking. The maids seem to be free too, they're dozing off.

Ah, it's peaceful.

◇

"Now then, honored guests. Please close your eyes and wait. Please do not open it until I give you the signal."

The tour guide is making a speech to us who are sitting on the seats that have been prepared on the deck. The ship is going to enter a 3 kilometers-long cave soon. There's a legend that says this cave is penetrated by the ancient empire's magician who've made the canal using magic.

The reason why we're asked to sit and close our eyes is to make our eyes get accustomed to darkness to see the tourist attraction in the cave ahead.

"From now on, Meeru the batkin will steer the ship replacing the captain."

That was the man who was patrolling during the night yesterday. I've thought that he's an escort soldier, but he would steer the ship huh. They're probably using demi-human who could use echolocation to steer through the terrain in the unlit cave.

A small boat that comes out of the harbor in front of the cave is guiding our ship entering the cave. A person is using light signal to tell the people on the other side of the cave.
I see, since it could only hold one ship, they're regulating the traffic.

The sails on the ship are folded when it approaches the cave.
Warm wind is blowing from the frontward. If this is a fairy tale, it'd feel like entering cave straight into the stomach of a giant monster.
Of course, such thing doesn't happen and we uneventfully enter the cave.
Soon after we enter the cave, the light dims. Of course, I'm the only one who open my eyes and observe various things. Everyone is obediently closing their eyes following the tour guide's instruction.

Since I have light intensity adjustment skill, I immediately get accustomed with dark places. It's truly convenient.

Ooh!

Even though the tour guide probably doesn't know the astonishment in my mind, he gives the signal.

"Now, everyone, please open your eyes slowly! This is the famous Phantom Firefly Cavern of Oak!"

I've seen it one step ahead, but it's quite a spectacle. Mosses on both sides to the ceiling of the cavern are casting faint lights in various colors, drawing mysterious gradation. It's like a nature's painting. Moreover, there are crystals located here and there reflecting the light, making it never dull. It's already quite beautiful with those alone, but there are even a lot of lights that look looks like fireflies flickering and dancing around.

What happen if emotional girls and little girls see such thing, it goes without saying.

"Glittering~? Flickering~?"
"Amazing nodesu! Master! Amaaziing nodesu!"

Pochi and Tama who are sitting beside me are getting too excited, they grab my shoulders and begin shaking it. My eyes is spinning.

"Beautiful."
"Amazing."

Arisa and Lulu are watching this magical scene as if their souls are stolen.

The two get off the sofa and sit beside my feet. Of course they're not sitting directly on the deck's floor, but on soft feather cushions that the tour guide has prepared.
I think they're unaware that they've grasped my feet near them. It's a bit painful.

"It's beautiful, yes, truly beautiful."

Mia is muttering feverishly while watching the fireflies dancing wildly. She occasionally becomes talkative huh.

Thud, with such sound, Liza's spear fell on the sofa nearby. Liza who comes to her sense from that sound picks up the spear. Everyone's line of sight gathered for an instant but it scatters away again. Liza apologizes for her impoliteness and returns to standing by posture, but she looks obviously embarrassed It's rare to see embarrassed Liza. It might be the first time even.

"Master, my vocabularies are insufficient. I request installation of the second language set."

What the heck is the second language set.

"You don't need to mind about vocabulary. It's enough with the word, beautiful."
"Yes, master. It's beautiful."

Nana leaks out a sigh of wonder and hugs my head from behind while watching the boisterous dance of the light. I'll say the important thing once again. Nana is hugging my head from behind with her breasts. Of course, she's not doing such boorish thing like wearing armor since we're on the ship. In other words, it's direct.

What a happy day.
I'd like for time to stop while it's like this.

7-19. A Night No One Knows

Satou's here. As I lived in Japan where the limit for religions was lax, country that went to war for difference in religious views was strange to me. I wonder if there's also religious war even in a parallel world?

◇

The ship carrying us is anchored at a place where the capital's night view can be seen. The port is crowded due to the tournament season, so we're waiting our turn. It seems the duke has issued order to prioritize ships that are carrying supplies, there are a lot of other anchored ships.

Since the captain has gotten the right to enter the port first thing in the morning tomorrow, it looks like we could enter the port without waiting tomorrow.
Everyone was watching the night view until just now, but since the youth trope began to doze off, I made them turn back to the room.
I hear light footsteps, I look back, and there's Arisa.

"You're going after all?"
"Ah."

I answer briefly to Arisa who's giving off strange atmosphere.

"I can't imagine you'd fall off against opponents at the level of short horn, but absolutely don't let your guard down, okay?"
"Ah, I know. Or rather, I'm going for it before the short horn demons could appear."

We wouldn't be able to tour the capital relaxedly if there are people who are like terrorists with bombs around. Moreover, I've been looking forward to the scroll workshop, like I would let them get in the way.

Furthermore, the identities of the people who are holding the short horns

are suspicious. Majority of them are younger people of the nobles who are members of a secret society called [Wings of Liberty]. There doesn't seem to be anyone who has peerage, but there's even a direct descendant of the duke among them. I feel like the weaselkins are involved with them in the background, but the members are all humans.

"Alright now, you have to absolutely come back unharmed okay? You're not a hero, so don't be reckless! If you come back with even a scratch, I will never let you go alone again!"
"I know, I won't overdo it. If some strange powerful enemies comes out, I'll proceed with [Protect life]."

Since Arisa still tends to be overprotective, I put her at ease by citing play tactics from a famous game that's common in both our worlds. Arisa finally nods her head while saying, "Really, that's fine then.", so I decide to depart.
<TLN: Dragon Quest reference, haven't played one in ages so I don't know the official English localization for the reference.>

"Arisa, the likes of river pirates might attack tonight, so have someone among our companions to do night watch, it's also fine to call lady Karina and her maids to our room. If she comes, Raka would be with her."

I shouldn't say that Arisa is overprotective. I'm one as well.

◇

Now then, there was a little something that I didn't tell Arisa.

First, there are about 300 Wings of Liberty's members who aren't holding the short horns. There isn't anyone past level 30. I feel that they should have been exposed with Yamato stone, but since every member has not-less-than two affiliations, the other affiliation is probably prioritized.

Their stronghold seems to be a mysterious area several hundreds meter below the capital's ground. I knew this after someone who I had marked before appeared out of map's range, when I checked, it was treated as different area. I wonder if it's a geofront or a labyrinth?

Of course, there are also buildings that look like their offices on various places above the ground.

Furthermore, there are three people with, [Abnormal Status: Demonic Possession]. Among the two executive members, one of them is a clergyman of Tenion temple. Putting aside the former, I wonder why is the latter possessed? Since the three of them are in the underground, I'll do something about them after collecting the short horns.

I wonder if it's because of Spy skill, I've successfully sneaked into the capital without being found out by the patrolling batkin.
Of course I didn't enter via the front gate, I leaped over the outer wall with sky drive skill.

Since it's a sneaking mission at night now, I'm wearing a jet black mask instead of the silver mask. I'm also not wearing robe, but the knight clothes with the ornaments taken out. I've thought that it's better to not wear something conspicuous since my purpose isn't demon subjugation, but thievery.

Now then, even though the night is long, they're gathering in the underground, so I should quickly raid the short horn holders above the ground.

First of all is from a fortuneteller in the back alley. I enter the store without knocking. It took some time with the lock, but I entered without problem. I was somehow able to do it with treasure chest unlock skill.

"Who? The shop is closed for today."

A sexy blond haired older woman tells so as if spitting out, but I make her faint without minding it. I've confirmed that there's no one beside her here, so I collect the short horn from the safe and leave. Just to be sure, I lock the door.

And then, I was able to collect until the fourth person without problem, but the fifth one is bad. Of all things, he's the third son of the duke. I am able to infiltrate the castle somehow, but there are a lot of guards with see-through,

surveillance, and enemy search skills scattered around. Even now, I'm hiding from the sentries who are patrolling the area.

There's no beastkin sentries, but I use [Deodorant] magic to erase my smell just in case.

I want to believe in Spy skill level 10, but the density of the sentries is too high, I can't feel relieved. I wonder if I could get invisibility-related skills if I erase my presence like when I get enemy search skill back then?

The fortunate things? There is no shortage of [enemies] who are trying to find me, so it should fulfill the conditions.

Back then I was searching for foreign body in the nature, but it's the opposite now. I relax, and imagine myself melting with the surrounding in mind and body.

Unexpectedly, maybe because I've had similar experience before, I obtain the skills easier that I've thought.

>[Hiding Skill Acquired]
>[Invisibility Skill Acquired]
>[Stealth Steps Skill Acquired]

I activate those skills, and I become able to pass the corridor while concealing my footsteps. There's no doubt that it's also thanks to the soft leather shoes I'm using.

Thanks to combination of the four skills and magic, the infiltration mission is successful, and I've arrived at the living room of the duke's third son. When I peep inside, there's an over thirty years old obese man muttering in low voice while facing a hand mirror. I've thought that he's talking to himself at first, but since the hand mirror is emitting magic power, it's probably a communication-type magic tool. When I listen closely--

"Then, kidnap--no, invite Sera from Teenion temple."

Disturbing words came out. If I'm not mistaken, one of the person with [Abnormal Status: Demonic Possession] is called Sera.

"Umu, I want to go there too, but I'm busy with government affair, so it's extremely unlikely that I could participate in the ritual. No, I am not making light of the society. I understand, I will be there before the ritual begin. Keep the person who can operate the gate waiting."

After he's finished with the hand mirror, he goes before the bookshelves while carrying it. After he operates something, the bookshelves slides out and a hidden room appears. Why do the residents of this fantasy world really like this kind of gimmick I wonder?

Since he's begun changing to the society's attire inside the hidden room, I quickly stun him and collect the short horn. There are passwords list and some kind of plan inside the treasure chest with the society's attire, so I collect them.
The duke's third son is fainted while wearing the society's attire, I decide to leave him as he is. Theoretically, I'd want to take his attire and wear it for the infiltration, but I don't want to wear that clothes.

There's a hidden passage along the drainage that continues to the castle's basement so I make use of it.

It smells of mold.

The rats are darting about since awhile ago. I would be caught if they were familiars, but since the radar and my crisis perception weren't kicking in, they were probably just normal rats.

There were several alarm devices that looked like spider webs along the way, but they were no obstacles before the trap discovery and crisis perception. Rather, the foul smelling drainage beside the passage I'm advancing in is more painful. Since I'd leave traces behind if I use [Deodorant] magic too much, I have to endure this.

In the middle of the drainage passage, I seized the society attires and changed to it. Typical of a secret society, the attire hides the figure and the face. Since the one who I seize this clothes from is a woman, I hesitate to leave her alone on her underwear, but I put clothes and a mantle that I've taken from the thieves back then on her and tie her up. I'll release her when

I return.

◇

"Toward the blue sky."
"The wind of liberty blows."

I replied with the code to a woman who was confirming the password. There are also other people from the society gathered here. There is no one who has short horn among these people here.

There are people wearing different clothes than ordinary members' that seem to be the higher-ups, they seem to be disputing about something since awhile ago.

"What should we do, Mitsuo-dono still hasn't come yet."
"That fool must be resting somewhere. There's no time until the ritual start, let's go ahead."

Apparently, they're waiting for the duke's third son that I've stunned earlier, but it seems to be near the time for the ritual. I've been scanning the document that I've snatched from the third son since awhile ago, but I'm doubting if the content is serious. They're offering sacrifices with the ritual to summon holy relic--based on the context, the short horn from hell.

Today's sacrifice is probably lady Sera that the third son's talked about before. Since she's been possessed by the demon, she might have been sacrificed already.

I go to the gate device that would transport us to the underground area with the other members. I've imagined that it'll be like the torii/shrine archway that I've seen before, but it looks more like the Stonehenge instead.

The device is activated, and we move to the underground area. It's a type without time lapse huh.

I activate [All Map Exploration] in secret, and check on the underground area's composition. It's the [Pig King Labyrinth: Ruin] here. It doesn't seem to be an active labyrinth. It's probably the same kind as the [Withered Labyrinth] in Arisa's country. There should be some monsters left even if it's withered, but there is none at all here. There are only common insects and small animals.

The society's people seem to be gathered beyond this corridor. Since my main objectives, the short horn holders and the three demonic possession people are there, it looks like I could settle it at once.

7-20. A Night No One Knows (2)

Satou's here. There were a lot of light novel and games that had had religious groups as the villains during the end of the twentieth century, but it felt like I didn't see it much recently.

◇

"Oi, you're late, the ritual has already begun. I'll open the door, so take your positions quietly."

A person who looks to be a leader-type is scolding us with rough voice in front of the door that leads to the ritual room. The scolding is over quickly, I slip in with the society members to go into the door.

I've thought of this since I mix in awhile ago, but they're full of leaks.
They don't look like a group that would do such outrageous thing as summoning items from hell. There's something mismatched about this. I wonder if there's someone who's pulling the string from behind?

Well, whatever.
There are probably only a few places where they can hold the ritual, so if I destroy this place, people who are thinking of doing misconducts will lay low.

The ritual room is wide. The width is 200 meters, the height is 20 meters, the depth is nearly 1 kilometer long. Of course there are a lot of standing pillars, but they sure are strong for supporting such enormous weight. Is it due to [Fixture Magic]?

My thought had wandered off for a bit.
The nearly 200 men and women inside the room are reciting poetry-like words repeatedly. It doesn't seem to be a spell chant.

There are three beds of stones lined up on the altar, and three girls are

sleeping there. Magic circle-like drawings are painted on the girls' bare skins. They don't seem to be dressed.

"Summon the holy relics as compensations for these unsullied girls!"
""""Summon!""""

It seems I've come slightly late. Following the most self-important looking man's shout and the replies, three executive members beside the girls raise ceremonial daggers overhead, and swing it downward toward the girls' hearts.

Maybe it's not like the usual me.

The moment I see the executive members raise the daggers, I rush out instantly.

I feel the members behind me are blown to the wall. Looks like they've been exposed to the reaction from my sudden acceleration.

I run at the speed of an arrow, but I won't make it like this.

Remote Stun would be excellent for a case like this, but Sky Drive is faster. The magic gun's range is 200 meters. It's still far.

"M-A-K-E-I-T!"

I try to convince myself by yelling.
The moment during the executives' dagger swinging downward is only for an instant, in reality it can even be called [Now], but this isn't futile it seems.

At the next moment, I feel like strangely running in water, and when I come to, I've kicked the daggers from the executives' hands.

>[Ground Shrink Skill Acquired]

◇

"Who are you!"

The man who said that must be the society's head, no doubt.
But I make everyone faints before they can say anything. Since I make use of the ground shrink skill that I've just acquired, I must be looking like split bodies from their point of views.

Thanks to that, I don't need much time to make the nearly 200 members powerless.

I'd like to collect the short horns, but I guess I'll do something about the demonic possession people first.

"Disturbing the ritual like this, what a boorish comrade, deojaru."
"Yes, yes, truly like the inferior beings humans are, nari."

Two demons appears by breaking out of the bodies of two members that have fallen on the ground as if taking off clothes.

They're not short horns.

They're the same upper-ranked demon like Wagahai-kun.
The 'ojaru' one has red body with deer-like horns, it doesn't have wings.
The 'nari' one has bronze body with water buffalo-like horns, it has two pairs of wings. They're both level 63.

"Good grief, he's foolish beyond help for disturbing our resurrection ritual, nanoda."

There's a figure of a girl sitting on the stone bed. The girl--no, the one possessing the girl doesn't show its true body.

Leaving aside the life of the members, I want to save the sacrifice girls.
I use ground shrink skill, and carry the two girls to the exit.

"I won't let you go, deojaru."

As if space is breaking in front of my eyes, the red-body demon teleports in.
Since both of my hands are occupied, I restraint it with [Remote Arrow] and

[Short Stun], shooting with maximum power.

"I'll return it, deojaru."

The magic that I've shot toward the demon return to me in entirety.

Space magic huh!

The Remote Arrows change their course back to the demon, but the Short Stuns are going to directly hit me. I put up Shield at once to stop it. The shield breaks in an instant, but I've successfully arrived at the door.

I leave the girls on the other side of the door, and close it.

The red-body demon behind me is fed up with the Remote Arrows that are coiling around it.

"Irritating, deojaru."

The red-body demon roars, making cracks run on the space and destroys the Remote Arrows. Thanks to magic perception, I could see stream of magic that worked like early warning before the cracks ran on the space.

I turn ON the silver mask set and hero title before it's too late.
My equipped sword is Durandal, not Excalibur, it's not because I'm unwilling. I've stored dangerous amount of magic power inside Excalibur when I experiment with storing magic power, so I'm afraid that I would collapse the capital if I'm careless with it.
Durandal's performance is worse than Excalibur, but it's exceptionally strong compared to Gjallarhorn, so there's probably no problem.

"Houhou? I've thought it's a rat, turn out you're a hero, nari."

The bronze demon is approaching while munching on something. The altar's side has become a blood bath.
They themselves become the demon's sacrifices this time huh.

Right now, it's not the time to sympathize with them.
I put off dealing with the red-body for later, and going to get rid of the

bronze demon first.

I move like teleporting with Ground Shrink, and slip below the bronze demon's chest, cutting--

Tremendous pressure overwhelms me.

>[Gravity Magic Skill: Demon Acquired]
>[Gravity Resistance Skill Acquired]

Still, I endure the high gravity forcibly, and swing the sword, but just before the holy sword touch the demon, I stop it, and back step away while opening the distance.

"The current hero is weak, instead his intuition is sharp, nari."
"If he cut just as he was, the hero's body would had been split in two, almost, deojaru."

It seems they've set some kind of trap-like magic.
If the crisis perception didn't ring me a warning, it would have been dangerous.

I make the Remote Arrows to fly around randomly, and hit the bronze demon with Short Stun, it seems that the trap magic breaks it huh.

I feel my body is being pulled slightly by the red-body demon. When I look at the log, it seems that it's using magic called [Drawing(Evil Snap)].

>[Space Magic Skill: Demon Acquired]
>[Space Resistance Skill Acquired]

I activate the resistance skill.

"The magic isn't too effective even though his level is low, deojaru."
"Ushashashasha, senility excuse nari huh?"

Their attentions turn toward each others, now.

Making full use of Ground Shrink and Sky Drive, I rain down Short Stuns in

16 three-dimensional directions.
As expected, the Short Stuns begin to change their course, turning back.
There's the bronze demon among one of the course.

When it hit the bronze demon, the short stun is forwarded to the red demon like the trap magic. It's different than the plan, but the result is alright.

Of course, they've only received small damages.

However, that's fine.

That instant chance I've got is quite enough.

When the blue glow from Durandal have melted in the darkness, the red-body demon becomes pieces of meat and falls to the ground.
I sprinkle it with dragon scales that I've taken out of the storage, incinerating it so it can't revive.

[Flash Slash Skill Acquired]

◇

"This is strange, nari."

Taking the moment when the bronze demon is stunned, I take out the Holy Bolt set loaded with magic power from the storage, and shoot it.

The bronze demon tries to repel it with its hand that has jet black spiral appeared on it.

"Avoid it, noda!"
<TLN: Not the demon's name.>

With the possessed girl's words, the bronze demon inclines his body to avoid the bolt in a hurry, but it couldn't avoid the arrow, and its upper body is ripped into many pieces. Annihilated.

I've originally expected the bolt to be a mere diversion, but it's unexpectedly effective.
I cut the bronze demon while also using it to test Flash Slash skill.

"This is, splendid nanoda. I have to apologize for thinking you're a small fry hero, nanoda. No, I ought to thank you for destroying my courtiers, nanoda."

The girl who's sitting with one knee drawn up on the edge of the stone bed murmurs so as if asking questions.
When the girl stands up, she begins to spin words in a clear voice as if she's a stage actress.

"The time of my revival has come. O humanity fear it! Today, at this time, the world will begin its walk into ruins noda!"

This should be the scene where I should shudder, but maybe thanks to the strange word she's adding at the end of her sentence, it feels like a comedy show instead.

Now then, looks like round two begins.

7-21. A Night No One Knows (3)

Satou's here. Ever since I come to this world, I get unnaturally high chances of meeting beautiful women, but it's not limited to only beautiful women.

◇

"What's wrong, are you so scared you can't talk, noda?"

However, I can only hear the scream of a chuunibyou patient from the girl who's declaring with daunting pose.
Moreover, she's swinging her arms matching her speaking rhythm, so her exposed breasts are shaking and swaying. I can't help but become interested in it since awhile ago. Yup, they're big relative to her age.

"O black-haired hero. I do not care why you're hiding your appearance, but can you entertain me like Yamato? I won't forgive if you bore me, noda."

I wonder if she has see-through skill, the girl's eyes are shining red.

I'm sorry for the possessing demon who's trying to set up the mood, but at this time, I'm not thinking, "How do I defeat the enemy", but, "How do I get this fellow out of the girl's body", instead.

I wonder if I could do something with Saint title and magic healing somehow?
It might be good to learn ways to exorcise demons. It'd be terrible if someone I know got possessed.

Let's use persuasion skill here--I've also thought of such thing. Before I could open my mouth, the girl's time is up.

"Thanks for making my courtiers become sacrifices, the power has been filled, noda."

Something is making cracking sounds.

The girl's back is splitting.

A wild boar-head comes out of it.

Right when the hairless wild boar demon starts to make its appearance, the girl's health becomes zero in an instant.

This isn't the time to be dumbfounded. Take action rather than regretting.
I rain down Short Stuns on the wild boar-head to restraint it, and strike it with palm technique combined with ground shrink while pulling the girl's body away.

I put the girl's body that has just died into the Storage. Of course in one set with the flowed blood. I cannot do it, but a priest or a miko might be able to revive a body that has just died. It should be that flexible in a fantasy.
I make Sera folder in the Storage as to keep it from mixing with other things.

"Fumu? What exactly you intend to do nanoda? Rather than worrying about collecting corpses, you should begin pursuing me instead nanoda."

I pay no attention to the incomprehensible critique.
Well, thanks to the useless talk, my magic power has recovered, so let's consider it as a good thing.

"Since I've just been resurrected, I am weaker than during my heyday, noda. This is your once in a lifetime chance to win nanodazo? Now, come at me with all your power, noda."

Violet light that looks like ripple creeps on the wild boar-head, and its body shines golden. Looks like they're support magic like what Wagahai-kun did. According to AR reading, they're [Physical Damage 99% Cut], and [Magic Damage 90% Cut].

If this is the demon's weakened form, just how strong it has been, let's quickly settle this.
I press the demon with the same combo I've used to beat the bronze demon.

Restrain it with magic, and finish with the holy bolt.

However, the two attacks were prevented without effort.

Short Stun and Remote Arrow are repelled just before it touch the golden wild boar-head's skin and disappear. Even though they've worked earlier, it seems that the golden skin has prevented it from working.
Next, the golden wild boar-head spit out something from its mouth, and that invisible something destroys the holy bolt, leaving only blue afterglow.

"This is, I can't make light of."

The golden wild boar-head murmurs in low voice, and lets out second support magic chant roar. Did it make some kind of chant from its mouth somewhere?

Oops, this isn't the time to flinch and think about it.

I went with the closing in and attack physically tactic.

One meter before my holy sword touch the golden wild boar-head, multiple small shields magic like the one Raka's used unfolds, and they're crushed by the holy sword.

They're just small shields that are easily broken, but--

Little by little.

Yes, it seems to be reducing the holy sword's power by just a little.

After breaking nearly 100 small shields, the holy sword stops after advancing for about 50 centimeters. I'd really like to learn this magic.

"Fumu, it has more attack power than Claiomh Solais that Yamato uses huh. It should have been able to quickly kill my retainers."

I'm still trying to push through it even now, but the golden wild boar-head demon takes out two liuyedao from its mouth, and attacks from both sides using the two sabers.

I stop one side with a holy shield, and the other with the holy sword. I'm pushed by tremendous power. Since the normal stone pavements are gouged out after I get pushed for several meters, I use sky drive as my foothold and hold out with all my might. It consumes magic power, but it can't be helped in this situation.

Even if I attack, it's always prevented by the multiple small shields. I have to do something about it or else my attack won't ever reach.
I could destroy the demon's weapons the moment our weapons touch, but conversely, the jet black mist-like feelers coming out of the liuyedao are also trying to break my sword, so I can't let my guard down.

◇

I haven't got damage, but it's the same for the opponent too. We can't hit each other, and only time passes.

"I will be more serious, noda."

The golden wild boar-head demon cover its whole body with violet light once again.

It's probably the unique skill of this guy.
The demon doesn't hide its unique skill at all. There are three which are [Ikkitousen], [Phantasmagoric], [Banpufutou]. Looking at the first case, it's probably fine to think that all three have been used.
<TLN: Ikkitousen and Banpufutou have similar meaning, that is "being a match for thousands".>

The two liuyedao are also wrapped in golden lights. It seems that the attack powers have been upped. Their powers were originally close to the holy sword, but now they're definitely stronger than Durandal.

I ward off the powered-up liuyedao with the holy shield. Seeing that my crisis perception is at work, the holy shield might be destroyed if I stop it carelessly.

The holy sword attack is once again prevented by the multiple small shields.

Wait.

Prevented by the multiple small shields?

In other words, even for the demon with 99% physical damage cut, holy swords are dangerous existences huh.

And I also remember another more important thing.

The holy bolt wasn't prevented by the multiple small shields, but intercepted by destruction magic.

In other words--.

So it's like that huh.

I'm setting up strategy while avoiding the demon's attacks.

I'll break through the multiple small shields, give damage to the demon, and drive in the holy bolt when it's at the state where it could not intercept with destruction magic.

◇

First, in order to break the multiple small shields, I have to increase my moves.

I put the holy shield back into the Storage, and pull out the magic sword Balmung on one hand. It's not a holy sword, but its attack power doesn't fall behind Durandal. It doesn't really matter, but both have matching golden grips.

However, it seems the opponent is also exploring the breakthrough solution.

Many jet-black rings arise near the golden wild boar-head demon.
They rush on me as if they're independent creatures. I try to counter them with Short Stun and Remote Arrow, but either magic disappear as soon as it comes in contact with them.

Anti magic-attack huh?

I take out a suitable stone out of the Storage and hurl it. The ring disappears while sounding like water droplet dropped on a heated frying pan.

Looks like physical attack works just fine.

I coat the holy sword with magic edge and intercept the jet-black rings that are assaulting.

>[Holy Edge Skill Acquired]

I don't know the difference with magic edge, but since the name indicates that the skill would work well against demons, I allocate it maximum point and activate it.

I absorb magic power from the holy sword, and coat it with holy edge, but they look completely identical. The magic usage is the same too, I wonder what differ.

"O defective hero, what are you nanoda? Even though you can only use beginner level magic, your avoiding capability is top-tier, your swordsmanship is superb yet you only have one straight technique. It does not look like you're holding back. You're like an artificially created cultivation, nanoda."

The analysis is too accurate, my ears hurt.

"I've been trying to turn you into stone with magic eye since awhile ago, but it's not working at all, noda."

In the log, starting with petrification, a lot of special attacks like paralyze,

and curse are displayed in array, but everything has been resisted.

Right at that time, the golden wild boar-head demon roars--magic huh.

I put up Shield as a countermeasure, but it's destroyed by the invisible bullet the golden wild-boar demon shoots. It's impossible for beginner magic after all huh.

When the shield is getting destroyed by the bullet, I frantically avoid the liuyedao's stabs. Even though the bullets are invisible, I can understand the techniques' trajectories due to Space Grasp and Magic Perception combined, so it's easier than the liuyedao. Since my clothes evaporates when it's near the bullets' orbit, it has become meaningless. My skin feels a bit itchy.

>[Destruction Magic: Demon Skill Acquired]
>[Destruction Resistance Skill Acquired]

I promptly activate the resistance skill. Seeing how close this fight is, I'd welcome it even if it only helps a bit.

I invoke holy edge on the holy sword, and prevent the invisible bullets, but since I'm also defending against the liuyedao, it's really busy.
I get closer and try to kick the demon, but it's prevented by multiple small shields just like with the holy sword. Since my shoes have been evaporated too, my toes hurt.

I have nothing to lose anyway, so I invoke Furnace Flame (Forge). It should be usable as a distraction at least. I'm using it while thinking lightly, but the multiple small shields are burned like scrap of papers.

"Inferno huh! That's your trump card is it."

The golden wild boar-head demon roars once again, but I can hear its speech overlapping it.

ROAR.

In an instant, thunderous roars are echoing to the point that I can't hear

anything.
Looks like I've been directly hit by the demon's magic attack that has vast range. The magic sword Balmung on my right hand is leaking out red light, but since it's blinking as if breaking, I put it back into the Storage. I take out magic sword Nothung in its place.

>[Explosion Magic: Demon Skill Acquired]
>[Explosion Resistance Skill Acquired]

I'm bothered with the difference between destruction and explosion, but I want the resistance for now. Honestly, it's too painful. Pain resistance, please work harder. It's like this even though my HP hasn't decreased much, I'm afraid if I get hit directly by the liuyedao.

My injuries are healed in a blink of an eye with self-healing, but my clothes has vanished.
Since I don't enjoy being in the nude, I wear the black mask equipment with quickdress. It can't be helped if this is called transformation having such speed.

"Fumu, looks like the counterbalancing is over, nanoda."

Counterbalancing?
The demon's figure doesn't look like it at all. Burned by the Furnace Flame (Forge), half of its body has inflamed.
Is it weak to fire. Or maybe, it's because Furnace Flame(Forge) is an intermediate level magic.

I generate holy edge on both swords on my hands and cut with them.
I invoke Furnace Flame(Forge) to burn down the small shields.

Although, it looks like the opponent has expected it too. It's invoking the explosion magic like just now, jet-black rings, and invisible bullets at the same time. Using three different magic at the same time huh, tremendous.

I shoot Short Stun on the ground while matching the explosion magic obstructing the view, using that gap, I use Sky Drive and Ground Shrink like somersaulting, and teleport behind the demon high in the sky.

While invoking Furnace Flame (Forge), I cut both the demon's arms with the holy and magic swords.

The swords reach before the shields are all burned down, but maybe because the number is low, it reach the demon's body. However, ripples spread out on the golden body, and the attacks are prevented.
When it's prevented, it feels like some kind of protection membrane has been broken. Typically in a game, it's like magic that could prevent attacks once. Since it shouldn't be able to prevent attacks indefinitely, I guess I'll rush it multiple times.

The demon swings the liuyedao without looking back, I stop it with both swords.

It was the demon's trap. At the same time my crisis perception kicks in, 8 rib bones break out of the demon's back and try to skewer me like living things.

I took evasive action at once, but they accelerated at the speed more tremendous than I had predicted.

Guh, I couldn't avoid it, and the rib spears pierced through my body.

It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.
I endure the burning-like pain, and break the stuck rib spears with my knee. Fortunately, the pain is only for an instant, it quickly disappears like pulling tides. It's aching, but I bear it.

The treatment is after this.

The demon is fixing its posture, but I won't let it. I drive the Furnace Flame to the wild boar-head with all my power. I can see the magic it's going to invoke, so I stab it with holy sword, destroying the magic.

When the demon is being burned by the Furnace Flame (Forge), it throws away the liuyedao, catches me with both its hands, and presses me hard. Such stupid strength. P, painful.

I fire an additional Furnace Flame (Forge) with all my might.

The invoked crimson flame roasts the demon's body. Of course, the one who fires it, me, am also not safe from it. The black costume becomes ash.

Maybe thanks to fire resistance, my body only becomes red, but I don't have any burn.

No, it is crazy hot here you know?

It seems I'm the winner of this patience contest.

The power on the demon's arms are loosened.
This momentary chance is enough, I enlarge the gap by force and slip away.

I store away the magic sword, and exchange it for magic power-loaded holy bolt, and immediately shoot it.

The holy bolt is sucked into the demon's abdomen--

The demon's abdomen along with its defense are destroyed.

Not yet.

The demon's health hasn't become zero.

I pour my remaining magic power into the holy sword Durandal in one go, and activate holy edge skill.
I split the demon's body into two, and even while spouting flames and smokes from its body, the golden wild boar-head demon raises its fist on the air, and swing its last blow.

The blue track of the flash slash sucks the demon's heart, blue light that gushes out of its body blow its upper body out.

While back-stepping away to open some distances, I take out a health and a magic recovery potions from the storage and gulp the two bottle down.

Yes, it's still too early to be relieved. If it dies with just this much, it couldn't be called a Demon Lord.

Yes, the demon's name is [Golden Wild Boar King], a level 120 Demon Lord.

Good grief, there are too many obstacles in my pleasant sightseeing tour.

Now then, shall we begin the third round next.

7-22. A Night No One Knows (4)

Satou's here. I wonder since when is the trend of boss characters transform for so many times when you're defeating them? It's generally troublesome when it's in a game, but when it's in real life....

◇

It's probably the effect of the demon's unique skill. The demon has revived as an undead. The demon's upper body that should have been lost has also regenerated in the blink of an eye. There's no worth in defeating this guy. The two liuyedao have been lost somewhere when I destroy the upper body earlier, thankfully.

I do have several trump cards, but since I don't know how many times the demon can revive, I won't recklessly use them. It's painful that one MP recovery potion only recovers 20% of my MP with one bottle.
From now on, I'll charge magic swords and the holy swords whenever I'm free.

"It has been since Yamato that I have to resort using Banpufutou's effect. O Nanashi, perchance you can beat me? Yamato took the heavenly dragons lot along to attack my castle. You alone intend to be the equivalent of a hero and heavenly dragons nanoda huh."

Fumu, since my name is blank, it's [Nanashi] huh. I guess I'll call myself Nanashi from now on.
<TLN: Na nashi=nameless.>

Thanks to HP potion and self-healing skill, my wounds have disappeared. It still hurts, but not to the degree that makes me unable to fight. Looks like it's bad for the opponent to let me heal more than this.

"The heavenly dragons are taking rests."

While holding three MP recovery potions on my mouth, I operate the storage with thought.
Since the demon launches destruction magic towards me, I slap the magic with my palm and change its course. The demon is muttering, "Ridiculous", but I ignore it. My palm is stinging. I don't want to touch that magic too much.

"Besides, the professional hero is currently taking a vacation with beautiful big-breasted women in the imperial capital."

I'd hit him if he really was on a vacation.

I exchanged Durandal for [Trump Card #1, Holy Spear Longinus] from the storage, and pour it in with magic power that I've just recovered. I feel dizzy from using too much magic power, but I endure it.

"Professional hero? Then what are you, nanoda?"
"I'm a part-timer. My main job is a tourist."

Tourist is not a job. I know.
Using vague words to distract the demon is just fine. The demon uses destruction magic, but the aim is loose. Use ranged magic if you want to hit me.

I shouldn't think unnecessary things.
The demon really launches ranged magic. I kick up the stone pavement below my feet, standing it up and make it into a shield. Unfortunately, I don't get tatami flip skill.

The demon's magic destroys the stone pavement and rushes to me.

I've put up Shield to buy some time, but it's meaningless. The shield also breaks in an instant. I twist my body and protect the important places.

Ouch.

As expected of the demon lord's attack. It's wholesomely painful. Even though the pain quickly goes away, painful thing is painful.
Looking at the health gauge that's only reduced for a bit, the demon is

probably the type that's weak with magic.

This time a breath attack is coming, so I use Ground Shrink to evade it. Of course, before it.

While closing in like teleporting, I launch a technique.

Three-stranded spiral spear attack.

I invoke Furnace Flame (Forge) at the same time to burn down the multiple small shields.
The first and second spiral attacks pierce both shoulders of the golden wild boar demon lord's, the third spiral attack pierces the heart. While like that, the holy light sucks the demon's body--

Half of the demon's body has been blasted.

However, the demon cut half of its body with both of its edge-like claws before the spiral spear attack effect reach it. A new body grows out of the remaining half. Are you a planarian.

This demon is much more immortal than Zen.

This time translucent tentacles-like things come out of the demon's hand and attack. What a diverse guy.
Since it's destroyed with just one stab of Longinus, I don't know what kind of attack it is, but it's probably dangerous to recklessly take it.

The demon's eyes are glittering, but since I don't know what kind of attack is it, I look at the log and a chill runs down my spine. They're instant death attack, followed by attack with instant death effect.

>[Instant Death Resistance Skill Acquired]

I stop my assault, and activate the skill on the spot. Next time, if I see the demon doing the same motion, I should take out a mirror.

◇

Since then, my attacks have hit it for many times, but the demon gets revived each time due to its unique skill's effect. It has been revived for seven times already, I want it to end.

The demon seems to think that magic and special attacks are not working against me, this time it changes to attacking physically.

The most annoying one is when I'm attacking it in close range.

While yelling with spirit, I stab at the demon's heart with Longinus, at that time, its hands stretch out toward me. I judge that I could avoid the stretched arms attack with a paper-thin difference, but--

The arm bone breaks through the hand and flies out like a crossbow's bolt. Its attacks have become increasingly absurd.

While being slightly surprised, I acrobatically avoid the bone arrow.
Short Stun is already unable to even act as a feint, so I don't use it.

Making use of the air as a foothold with Sky Drive, I stab with the holy spear while being upside-down.
It's no good even though the heart is pierced after all huh.

When it comes to this, I have no choice but to cut up the body to pieces and then, evaporate or burn it down.
I exchange Longinus with Durandal.

There's only little magic power left in it, so the blue light that comes out of Durandal is faint.

"What's wrong hero. You can't manage to defeat this immortal body, nodana?"

The demon takes out two rib bones from the sides under its arm, holds it, and lets out a short roar that makes the rib bones get covered in black flames. Flame magic swords huh?

"I'll let you taste my black flame bone swords, noda. Come, dance the dance of death."

The demon lord comes attacking with two swords style, but leaving aside its appearance, the black flame bone swords are more fragile than the liuyedao. When our swords clash, I just get slightly burned from the black flame.

"What the hell are you, nanoda? Basking in the black flame, bringer of ruin that burns down heavenly dragons, why are you unhurt?!"

I guess it's because my level is high? No, it might be because my destruction resistance skill is at MAX.
Moreover, I do get hurt. It's just that my recovery speed is fast. MP is used for recovery, so I should take care as not to get hurt as much as possible. It hurts after all.

"If you're unhurt, then I'll just keep attacking until you do, noda!"

Please stop doing endless repetitive moves.
The demon endlessly takes out another black flame bone swords whenever I destroy it, and right when I get bored with it, I've finally recovered enough magic power.

As I energetically destroy the black flame bone swords, I cut the demon's body into pieces. When it starts reviving, I invoke Furnace Flame (Forge) during the regeneration's time of half of an eye's blink, incinerating it.

And yet, the demon still regenerates without losing to the fire.

As expected of a demon lord.

Oops, this isn't the time to admire it.

While maintaining Furnace Flame (Forge), I charge holy bolts that I've taken from the Storage, set up crossbow sets, and shoot it. I shoot the remaining 10 sets during the short time.

At last the pieces of meat that are regenerating stop wriggling.

I have to perform the last rite now.
I take out a new thing from the storage, [Trump Card #2, Holy Sword Galatine], and slash with it, evaporating the demon.

I've not thought that I'd end up taking out the secret, Galatine. Galatine is a sibling sword of Excalibur, I've filled with reasonable amount of magic power. If it's still not good with this one, I'd have to use Excalibur even though it's dangerous.

In preparation for the second revival, I gulp down potions. I drink too much, feel sick.

◇

Apparently, it won't revive again. The evidence is the appearance of these guys.

"Kusukusu, it lost huh."
"It lost, lost to Yamato."
"It lost to the new hero too."

Three small violet lights rise up, just like the time with Zen.
No, their colors are a bit black. Jet black lights are also mixed in occasionally. The impression I sense from them are the same, but are they different things?

"It's an Orc after all."
"What should we use this time?"
"Weasel seems smart."

Thinking that I would not harm them, they let their guard down, I cut the black violet lights.

I slash the jet black lights three times, and the three after-lights disappear. I take off [God Slayer] from my title, and put the divine sword into the Storage. It feels like the divine sword has absorbed the slashed lights, but

since the divine sword's status hasn't changed, it's probably just my imagination.

After crushing the black violet lights, the log flows in great speed indicating loots acquisitions, but I scroll back on it and will check the loot for later. The log properly shows [Fragments of God have been defeated!], so I've probably beaten them.

When I carefully think about it, the deeds make it as if I'm picking a fight with the god, but it's a done deal so there's no use in thinking about it. Though, I feel that an existence that lends its power to the demon lord would be hostile even if I don't do anything anyway. Even if I've antagonized the god, I hope that it's the kind of god with 100 years later scale.

>Title [Demon Lord Slayer]
>Title [Demon Lord Slayer 『Golden Wild Boar King』] Acquired
>Title [True Hero] Acquired
>Title [Unsung Hero] Acquired.

7-23. A Night No One Knows (5)

Satou's here. It seems that the generation that has been around during the dawn of home consoles makes a list of hiragana for Spell of Restoration. I laughed thinking that it was a joke when I heard it, but it's the truth. Humans could unexpectedly work hard if it's for the sake of entertainment. <TLN: http://dragonquest.wikia.com/wiki/Spell_of_Restoration.>

◇

Fuh, that was tiring.

Both of the masks have been broken, so I put on a white mask that Arisa's made for cosplay at her request. I feel like I know where the inspiration for it comes form, but it seems like it'd fall off easily, scary. I put on cheap clothes and a mantle, and head toward the hall's exit.

The hall looks disastrous to the point that I admire it for not collapsing. The floors are turned upside down, several pillars are destroyed, many places have become craters. Some of the craters have glasses formed from Furnace Flame (Forge). There isn't any trace of the altar.

I should say as expected of a demon lord. I've just barely won even though my level is three times as high and fully loaded with items.

It's unfortunate that I won't get a rematch--I don't have even the slightest bit of such thought.
Fortunately, the opponent was a type weak with magic, but if it was strong in both points, I might have lost.

I'll go watch the tournament at the capital and study sword techniques and battle forms.

And also, I'd better resume spell chanting practice.
If an opponent of demon lord class begins with space magic, I don't think I

could win. Among the scrolls that I would get from viscount Shimen (Toruma's parent house), magic destruct and magic cancel are indispensable. And also, intermediate level or higher attack magic. I might have got checkmated if I didn't have Furnace Flame (Forge). If I find a nice liquor during the journey, I will be sure to present it to the one who has sold me that scroll, Galhar-shi.

While thinking those thing, I open the heavy door and get out of the hall. I immediately understand why the door has been slightly opened.

There should have been a member here. I search in the Storage. There's an item called [Petrified Member]. Come to think of it, the demon lord was attacking with petrification magic eyes right. He saw that huh, curiosity killed the cat indeed.

I put long shirts on the two sacrifice girls. The two have proportions that don't look like their 14 years old ages, so I can have some peaces of mind with this.

The girls seem to be Garleon and Parion temples' miko. They're both level 30, quite wonderful.

I carry them both on my shoulders to the teleportation room, but I don't know how to operate it. The operation manual is among the loot I've got, but honestly, I'm too tired, I can't bring myself doing all these.

I scrape off the ceiling with a magic spear, and expose the soil.

Next, I use Mud Wall to create a narrow passage. Magic is really convenient. I run up the impromptu passage--or rather, hole, with Sky Drive. There are three members in the initial teleportation room, but since it's troublesome, I hit them with Short Stun. They should not be dead.

Since the road I use to come here leads to the duke's third son's room, I pick the course that goes to the temple via the map and advance toward there from the underground. I see a white crocodile and a mysterious creature-like person wearing a rag along the way, but I ignore them all. It might be good to come play here while bringing presents when I've become better.

I'm going to Tenion temple, the place where the dead girl comes from. It's not because the girl belongs there, but because only Tenion temple has a head miko of old age with level higher than 50. Moreover, she has the [Saintess] title.

While mechanically advancing through the course that I've picked earlier, I operate on the girl's corpse in the storage. I try to drag and drop the blood that has flowed out of the girl and stack them. Rather than stack, it seems the blood has been absorbed by the corpse, they can't be separated it seems.
I drag a potion with the same idea, but it's no good.

The title [Saintess] that the Tenion head-miko has comes to my mind. Maybe it also has some kind of special effects like the hero title?

I have nothing to lose, so I put on [Saint] title, and drag the potion, it works.

Although it's not like she's been revived. The item's name has changed from [Sera's Corpse: Degree of Damage, Maximum] to [Sera's Corpse: Degree of Damage, Great]. I drag several potions until the item name changes into, [Sera's Corpse], so I don't think this is a waste.

Afterwards, it all depends if there's resurrection magic or not.

◇

"Ara, the assassin tonight is quite excellent. This is the first time I don't notice one until he's this close."

I've sneaked into the Tenion head miko's room, but I immediately get mistaken for an assassin.

"Ara, you're an assassin and also a kidnapper?"

The head miko-san who has noticed the girls on my shoulders asks as if baffled.
Beside holy magic, this old woman also has character appraisal and crisis

perception skills. That's why I've made my level to be 70, like the Saga hero is, beforehand, so she would believe the story later. I've left my displayed skills to be of recovery-related ones.

Anyway, let's correct the misunderstanding for now.

"Nice to meet you, Yu Tenion Head Miko-dono. I am Nanashi. I have no intention of harming you. These two girls are Parion and Garleon miko that I've rescued from a cult group called 『Wings of Liberty』."
"My. I certainly remember them. Hey, Nanashi-san. Won't you show your face. It's hard to talk with that mask."
"I'm very sorry, head miko-dono. It is my principle to hide good deeds. Please pardon me."
"Is that so, you're such a shy saint-sama."

Her voice is young. Her moonlit face doesn't look like a 80 years old at all. I would believe it if I'm told she's 17.

"Hey, Nanashi-san. Don't you know the whereabout of our kidnapped miko, Sera."
"I knew."

It's not reflected on her expression, but her tone of voice becomes deeper. She seems to have guessed everything from my words, her face is stiff.

"That child has died huh."

I nod on her words.

"Nanashi-san, could you honestly tell me one thing?"
"If I could answer it."

She asks in slightly trembling voice.

"Was the one who deprived Sera's life the humans of 『Wings of Liberty』? or--"

After hesitating for a bit, she continues her words.

"Demon lord. That's right isn't it, Sera has been sacrificed for the demon lord."
"That's right."

A trickle of tears streams down the head miko's noble face.

"Is that so, that child wasn't able to go against her fate."

The head miko-san talks with sobbing mixed in.
It looks like there's an oracle that says the demon lord will appear in not so distant day. However, the place are different in each of oracles that the seven miko has received, therefore, everyone believes that their own gods has brought oracle for themselves each.

According to head miko-san, the fate of the girl (Sera) was to become a sacrifice for demon lord's resurrection in this city. Even though Tenion temple had put utmost efforts in protecting her, she suddenly disappeared in her own room the evening today.

And, it seems that the oracle of Tenion temple tells that the demon lord would be resurrected in this Oyugock city.
When I ask in detail just in case, the name of labyrinth city, Selbira, and the kingdom that has occupied Arisa's kingdom, Yowok kingdom have also appeared. The remaining four are land of gods Parion, the principalities of the ratkin and weaselkin, and the last one is a country that exists on the other continent.

To get a hit on the 1/7 probability, both me and this city were unlucky.

◇

Let's get back to the main topic.

"Yu Tenion head miko-dono, are you able to use resurrection magic?"
"Yes, I'm able to."

Oh, so it exist, resurrection magic!

As if pouring water on my excitement, the head miko continues with gloomy voice.

"However, there are several conditions for it. First, the subject has to have been baptized by Tenion temple. Second, it must be within 30 minutes after the death. Third, this resurrection artifact has to have stored enough magic power. Since it has been used to resurrect the legitimate child of the duke 20 years ago, it cannot be used for several years more."

What, that sort of things huh.
I pick up the artifact hanging on her neck and put magic power into it. I proceed steadily. It hasn't been filled even after putting in 2000 MP.
It can't be helped, I take out Excalibur from the Storage, and make it into a magic power source. The head miko is surprised when she sees the holy sword, but she puts on appearance by smiling like a Japanese.
The artifact is filled after around 20.000 points in. The capacity of this holy sword is extraordinary after all. I should had used it as magic power tank rather than a weapon when I was fighting the demon lord.
I hear this afterward, but it seems that the only one who could put magic power into the artifact is people who have [Saint] or [Saintess] title.

"I will summon miss Sera's corpse here. It's only been several seconds after her death, so there should be enough time."
"That can't be, time magic should have been a magic that only appears in fairy tales, not the reality...."

There's no time magic huh. I've wanted to go back in time and meet Yamato. I put back my astray thought.

I take out Sera's corpse from the Storage. Since she's naked, I put a towel on her. Someone is astonished when I take the corpse out of the storage, but I decide not to mind it.

The head miko is chanting a long spell.
Holy magic is usually long, but this time it's especially long.

The chanting is complete, I make sure that Sera has turned from item back to person, and leave the place afer that.

I've forgotten to report about the demon lord thing, but they have the convenient oracle, and it'd be uncool if I go back just to report it, so I leave it. I'm really tired today.

At any rate, it was a long night.
I'd like to be healed at the night place, but for the sake of relieving Arisa and the others who are waiting anxiously, I decide to go back.

Intermission: The Melancholy of Zajir

"You idiot! Put yer' back into it if you want to use the phase hammer!"

The master's fists roar again today.
I've been under master's care for 30 years now, but I still can't use the phase hammer to his satisfaction. Even among master's personal pupils, the only two who could wield the great hammer are only me and Garir. After that, I just have to become able to swing it properly. I'll show that I'd be able to do it in 10, no 5 years. And then, someday I'll build a family (shotai) with Jojori.

"Zajir-san, what's wrong with true character (shoutai)?"
"Jojori huh, nothing, just something trivial."
"Is that so? We have a guest for grandfather, is he in the hall?"
"Yeah, he's in a bad mood, so take care."
"I understand, thank you."

She's lovely today too.
She answers properly even though I act brusque. Truly a nice woman.

◇

The guest that Jojori mentions is a humankin Kozou (youngster). I don't really know humankin age, but he's probably just at coming of age. However, master tells the youngster to try and make a sword. Moreover, not with iron but mithril? What a waste.

There's a failed mithril from that idiot Rodar's failure earlier, I guess I'll bring that. An amateur probably won't know the difference anyway.

"Use this."
"Yes, thank you very much. This is the first time I'm blacksmithing with a mithril, I feel nervous."

It looks like he has experience of making an iron sword, he's probably not a total amateur, but the ones here are all tempered warriors, even the lowest seat, Rodar, has been making sword for 50 years. It'll be pitiful to compare him with them. Master is cruel for letting this.

The motion of Kozou who smoothly put fire in the furnace slightly catches my attention when I see it. Is this guy really an amateur?

That small doubt becomes conviction when I see Kozou holds the mallet.

That unwavering stance.

He looks like master.

That impression isn't wrong.
Kozou looks puzzled as soon as he strikes with he mallet. Did he notice that slight difference? He could discern failed mithril even though it's the first time he hit one.
The master's fist drops on me for the mithril thing, but such thing doesn't matter. If I give this guy the best mithril, what kind of sword will he make? It's been awhile since my heart boils.

I run to the mithril refinement furnace before master and the others.
I've entrusted it to Rodar. This time, I'll prepare the best mithril myself.

"Yer' bastards! Get fired up!"

I motivate them with rough words but the refinement furnace's guys keep lying on the floor.

"Zajir-san, today, the gnomes aren't here. Because of that there's not enough magic power."
"Spirit! If you just put your spirit, anything can be done."
"Please don't say unresonable things. Then, Zajir-san, please pour your magic power. With spirit!"

That Ganza has also gone to the meeting with the gnomes huh. That's why the mithril today come out bad huh. It's not because of Rodar being careless in his supervision. I'll treat him to a liquor next time.

I try to pour my magic power, but it's not something that an inexperienced person can do. I can only pour around 0.5%. Seems that I'm bad with putting magic power into magic tools.

"It's fine to put magic power into this right."

Looks like Kozou is filling magic power as ordered by master. Judging from the short cane on his waist, he probably can use magic, but the furnace is an equipment that's normally filled by 10 gnomes magic power. It's not something that one person can somehow do, I've experienced it myself just now.

And yet, that guy has accomplished it alone.
The head of the refinement group is surprised to the point that his jaw looks as if dislocated, but I can't say that I don't understand his feeling.

Master is checking the finished mithril with examination apparatus. I know by just seeing it. That's a first-class one. In addition, extremely so. This is the first time I see master especially uses examination apparatus.

◇

Ordered by master, I bring out a great hammer made of mithril alloy from the warehouse. It's far heavier than the usual phase hammer. Unbelievably, master tells Kozou to swing this great hammer.
Telling non-dwarves to swing the great hammer?
Garir and me express our opinions to master, but we only gets dropped fists. I can't go against master's decision.

Kozou who has been asked to swing the great hammer by master also becomes dumbfounded when he's in front of the great hammer.

No wonder. It's not something that a thin humankin kid can lift. When I show him how I hold it with one arm, he's greatly surprised. Kozou admiring me makes me ticklish. We're in front of Jojori. Say more.

"Oops-a-daisy. It's really heavy after all. I can't stabilize my shaking body."

When I look back, Kozou is lifting and practice-swinging the great hammer.

Idiotic. The weight is not something a humankin can stand--that's what should have been....
He's staggering, but he's certainly lifted it. Garir and me can lift it since we have herculean strength skill, but even for the dwarves in this room, only half of them can do it. Who the heck is he really.

"Zajir, go call Ganza."

Master shouts while holding the secret medicine pot on one hand. When I tell master that Ganza is visiting his home and not here, master shouts in angry voice enough to fill the whole room while boiling in anger.
I'm almost given an errand to go to the gnome's hometown, but I get out of the hardship since Kozou can do compounding. What a versatile guy.

Later, Ganza asks me the name of the one who's done the compounding, but since I always call him Kozou, I tell Ganza, "Don't know", and he gets really depressed. He must be dissatisfied for having the compounding equipments used by other people. He shuts up when I says to go tell master if he has complaints.

◇

I burn into my eyes the figures of master and Kozou forging the sword. They could be called twin existences, they match their breaths perfectly.
Unbelievably, Kozou swings that great hammer for all night long without uttering even a whine. I can't let a humankin even touches the great hammer, but I allow it if it's this guy. My colleagues have the same opinion too.

Fairy sword.

The sword that Kozou swings is beautiful.
I will forge a sword exceeding that one someday. It's unreachable for the me now, but I'll show that I will surely reach it after several dozens of years.

Absolutely.

◇

Later, liquor from Kozou for master has arrived.
He's sent it with the barrels altogether, he sure knows dwarves. He's a heavy drinker that beat master and me in drinking bout back then after all. I'd like to drink together again someday.

"Yo, Zajir. Is Dohar-shi around?"

I hear voice of a delicate man with an attitude. It's the eccentric Galhar who's opened a magic shop in the city above ground.

"Fun, there's no reason for you to not use honorifics for me. Call me Zajir-sama."
"Now now, Zajir-san. Don't talk like that to a childhood friend even as a joke."

The lovely Jojori shows her face behind Galhar. Childhood friend is a story of 30 years ago. It's a thing from several dozens years ago.

"Jojori, it's just like a child wanting to be glorified."
"Alright, I accept that challenge!"

I roll up my sleeves and am going to hit Galhar, but Jojori stop it with her body. Why, are you an ally of Galhar. She calls Galhar without honorific even though she uses "san" with me.

"Galhar, you too stop talking with biting words. Please get along."
"I know, Jojori."

Even though I get scolded by Jojori, when I see Galhar who's red like an octopus, I become wanting to hit him once.

"Wait Zajir-san, please don't use violence."

Dang, I unintentionally hit him.
My quarrel with Galhar continues until master comes back from a meal.

"What's this commotion. Do it outside if you want to make noise."
"Ara, grandfather."
"F, forgivme, master."

Fufun, he's been hit too many, he can't talk well. Serves you right.

"Wer' just playing arnd."

I just have a slight difficulty of talking today. It might even rain later.

◇

Thanks to Jojori-san who calls Don Haan siblings to cure us, both of us can talk now.
Galhar who rarely comes to the underground has come to invite us-which surprisingly include me too--to drink the liquor together-. He should have said so from the beginning. People who brings liquor with him is never bad people.

"This light green liquor is delicious."
"This crimson liquor is also sweetly easy to drink."

We can't have a banquet with just the shares that Galhar brings, so we take out the liquor barrels that Kozou has given to master.
As I'm told, it seems that the liquor Galhar brings is also from Kozou.

Why?

"Several barrels of liquor came together with a letter of gratitude. In the letter, along with gratitudes, he says that he's escaped death thanks to the goods that he's bought from me. I've opened the magic shop for 20 years, but this is the first time I've been thanked to this degree."

I heard that Galhar was forced to buy trash-like things when he went to the humankin city, but it seems he's doing a good work.

"Galhar, don't forget the feeling now. If you do that, you'll become the best dwarf magic merchant."
"That's right, Galhar. The best of gnome are Han and me though."
"That is so, Galhar. Aim to become the best among the dwarves. You'll always be second in this city though."

Even though master specially gives a good word to Galhar, the Don Haan siblings mix in.
It seems master has approved him, but I won't hand Jojori over. While battling for Jojori's line of sight from across, we gulp down the liquor cups at the same time.

A good liquor with a nice woman, and a nice rival (friend), is good.
Next time, I want to have a banquet together with Kozou.

Intermission: Zena's Squad Disaster

<TLN: The chapter is told in two alternating timelines, ◇ symbol signifies timeline change.>
"Zena, the monsters flocks are coming. There are 50-60 flying type ones. As for the ones coming on the ground, there are 3 big ones, 10 medium-sized ones, and a lot of smaller ones--around 400. Most of them are insect types."

Rio comes back from scouting bringing quite hopeless numbers. Furthermore, those are just small portions of the enemies.

We, the 24 people from Seryuu city labyrinth selected corps, are the core of the left wing unit that is made in hurry and comprises of 300 people consisting of civilians, farmers, and serfs. They're similarly frightened. It's natural to be so, they're forced to fight monsters that they usually never even see while not even having decent equipments.

"Hear me, everyone must survive! Don't think only on defeating the enemy and becoming a hero! You lot's lucks are good, we have elites that have survived fight with an upper demon and real dragons, not wyverns. There is no need to worry for things like small fry monsters or mid demons."

The Vice-Captain, sir Rilo encourages the ally. He's slightly overbearing, but it seems the grim faces are decreasing from the people. That's good.

I never imagined that we would get involved in this fight when we departed from Seryuu city.

◇

"We're doing well huh~, Zena-chi."
"That's right, Lilio."
"Lilio-san, nevermind when you're in private, but call her squad leader Zena during the march."

"Ho~i, Iona sure is stiff."

Iona-san scolds Lilio.
But, it's embarrassing to be formally called squad leader Zena.

It's been half a month since we get chosen into the selected labyrinth corps--abbreviation of labyrinth city Selbira training selected corps--after much hardships.
We should have departed on the beginning of spring, but due to the will of Earl-sama, it's been accelerated and the corps has departed. The captain and vice-captain might have decided to sortie when they hear that the season for departing has changed since the snow falls late this year.
The selected labyrinth corps consists of two knights squad with four knights and junior knights each, three magic squads with one magic soldier, two guards, one scout each, and then, one engineer squads. Beside those, there are two civil officials, and four servants.

There are 30 members in total, eight horse riders, and five carriages, maybe thanks to that sometimes thieves that can be seen on valleys or medium sized monsters attack, but they're no match against us who have been tempered in the Seryuu city underground labyrinth.

"By the way, Zena-chi."
"Yes?"

I answer cautiously. Whenever Lilio asks like this, it's always nothing good.
I receive the provision that Iona passes. They're black bread that's roasted to be hard as stone, and bean soup. Putting aside the taste, I'm happy with the warm soup. The magician, Rodril, who's been used as a substitute of firewoods is dissatisfied, but at a time like this, I'm jealous of people who can use fire magic.

"With how well we're going, shouldn't we catch up to him soon?"

I tried to keep my mind in peace, but I couldn't stop my twitching reaction.
What should I do? She would poke more if I answered with, "Catches up with whom?". I somehow don't want to answer with, "We're still far away."

"Catches up with whom."

When I was troubled with the reply, Ruu asked. Even though Iona-san was silent, mou, Ruu.
Look, Lilio is holding her laughter while having a really bad smile on her face.

"The boy of course."

Lilio calls Satou-san with boy. He certainly seems to be younger than us from his looks, but I think Lilio who has baby face herself shouldn't call him boy. It somehow sounds like a special nickname, I feel unpleasant to it. Is this jealousy?

"Boy?"
"It's about Zena-san's lover."

Iona answers Ruu's question.

It's not, he's not my lover yet.

Love story is a favorite of Iona-san, so it seems she can't endure it. However, please stop talking with me as the joke material. It's painful, heartrending, and makes me feels uncertain.

The journey continues in this peaceful atmosphere for awhile, but it abruptly ends.

◇

"We're going to use traps for the ground enemies, and fight the airborne ones. We're not going to use bows for this. Zena, and Norina, drop them to the ground with wind magic, then the knight squads overrun them at once. I leave the others to vice-captain Rilo. Kill even one of them with all your power.
Zena, and Norina, after you use magic, immediately recover your magic power on the spot. Two squads concentrate on protecting them. Don't be lured and break out even by mistake."

Captain Derio tells everyone the strategy again.
It seems that the main vanguard unit of the monsters is going to clash with baron-sama unit. We can see the cloud of dust between the bushes and trees from here.

"Start the chants."

Vice-captain Rilo orders so since captain Derio's knight squad is departing. The voice is powerful, typical of a man.
Norina and I start the magic chantings. I chant [Fallen Hammer], and Norina chants [Turbulance]. Turbulance knocks down flying monsters to the ground, it's a tactic for certain victory against a wyvern.
The problem is there are too many enemies. Unlike Turbulance, Fallen Hammer's area of effect is narrow. It can only knocks down 10 monsters at most. I adjust my cane's angle in order to have the spell casted in the center of the flock.

"....■ Turbulance"
"....■■■ ■■■ Fallen Hammer"

I invoke the magic, slightly late from Norina. Alright, it's according to the aim.
We successfully swats down around 40 Tusk Horseflies to the ground. Right after, the captain and his squad overrun the tusk dragonflies from the flanks using wedge-shaped formations. Leaving aside when the tusk dragonflies are flying, they're slow on the ground, they become victims to the spears and hoofs.

"Whole unit, charge!"

By the order of vice-captain Rilo, all units beside Norina's and mine charge.
In order to recover our magic power, we begin meditating on the spot. With the special breathing technique taught in the army, magic power recovers faster than usual. On the other hand, we're completely defenseless when we're meditating, so guards are necessary.
Lilio's crossbow, and Iona's greatsword intercept several tusk dragonflies and glutton dragonflies that are late. Since I'm fully absorbed in recovering behind Ruu's great shield, I don't see their activities.

It seems that we're the only one who fight relatively smoothly. At first, the right wing collapses, and as if trailing it, the center begins to collapse as well.
During this time, we're already fully occupied with repulsing the enemies before us, so we can't grasp the situation of our ally. Due to that, when the ally begins to retreat, we fall behind. Gradually, we get stuck with guarding the rear.

I unconsciously put my hand on the chest section of my leather armor.
A folded stole is there. My important amulet.

◇

"Is there something?"

There should be still some time until the break, but the carriages have stopped. Lilio who has immediately gone to the front carriage to check comes back, we listen to the situation.

"We've met with the army of earl Lesseu."
"Since we're on earl Lesseu's territory, it's not strange to meet his army right?"
"The problem is, the one who call himself the earl is a boy."
"Isn't the earl supposed to be a man at his prime?"
"To make matter worse, they look like remnants of defeated army."

When we're chatting idly, the captain calls us.
The captain tells us that Lesseu city has been destroyed. It was an attack by a demon that had brought monsters along.

"Looks like the demon is level 40, an intermediate one. They say that there are 200 flying monsters, and 1200 ground monsters the demon brings."
"How strong are they?"
"The monsters are mostly a bit stronger than average soldiers, but there are some strong ones mixed in. The detail about the demon is unclear, but it seems it's a horse-headed demon strong at fire magic. It seems that the

permanent army of Lesseu city has been annihilated from a surprise attack by the demon alone."

I'm confident that we can fight a lower demon even though we won't be able to win, but if it's an intermediate one, I don't think we have any chance of victory with the current force. Excluding captain Derio and the vice-captain who are at level 20s, everyone else is at level 10s. There is no magician that specialize in bombardment magic like in Seryuu city here. There are only three magic soldiers, including me, here. Our magic power capacities are low, so we can't do anything showy.

"The new earl Lesseu wants us to participate with the demon subjugation under the pretext of the [Blue Covenant]. We cannot turn this into scrap paper. The non-combatant should take refuge with the carriages in the nearby villages. It's probably safer than in the city."

The [Blue Covenant] that the captain talks about is the oldest covenant that has been passed over among the nobles since the founding of Shiga kingdom. The covenant is mainly about how the military has to cooperate together in case of demon attack. It's rarely put into work, if I'm not mistaken, the last time that happens is at marquis Muno's territory 20 years ago, before I'm born.

Just like this, we get included into the impromptu army at the second city of earl Lesseu's territory. The whole force consist of 800 regular soldiers, and 2000 militia. Even though it's twice the monster's number, the militia are just padded forces, it's certain that this will be a hard fight.

It'll be over if the demon attacks directly, but if we use the city's wall to make it into a siege war, then there's still a chance to win. Fortunately, there's an emergency communication magic tool in this city, so the information should have arrived at the neighboring cities.

We just have to wait for reinforcements now.

Everyone has thought so.
The next day, the young earl Lesseu has decided to fight the monsters on the field. The captains have tried to make him change his mind, but it's no good.

Satou-san. I might not be able to keep our promise of sending letters.

◇

"Zena-chi, are you alive?"
"Yes, Ruu has protected me."
"Hey, Lilio. Are you only worried about Zena."
"Ruu is the most heavily armed one right. Moreover, it's impossible for Iona to die."

My memory isn't clear. We should have been dealing with monsters on the rear.

"I'm glad that you trust me. The flash earlier must have been an advanced level tactical magic fired by the demon. We would have joined the deceased if there was no Zena-chi's defensive magic."

Everyone is pitch black covered with dust.
We've narrowly escaped deaths somehow, but the footsteps of the monsters are approaching. If we start moving, the demon in the sky would probably snipe with magic without mercy.

At that time.

The sky is divided, and that appears.

A ripple that looks like when a fish turn up on water surface floats and then, it appears in the sky. A beautiful silver ship. It's a ship right?

"The great me has arrived!"

A swordsman wearing blue armor shouts while standing on the tip of the ship without any support. Even the talkative Lilio can't follow this development, she's unable close her opened mouth.

That was the encounter with the Saga empire hero, sir Hayato.

That man holds overwhelming power that annihilates the intermediate demon with one swing of his holy sword, Arondight. Even the many monsters were destroyed by his ship--Dimensional Traveler Jules Verne--burned by the ship's beam.

We're saved.
If this miracle didn't happen, we would die in battlefield like the others.

I want to become stronger.

At least, in equal footing with the demon. For the shares of our fallen comrades too, we will become stronger.

Next time, we will stand beside the one who creates the miracle!

Intermission: Pochi's Secret

Pochi will not forget.

That day, the day I'm given name.

◇

"Princess, we have come to escort you back."

Two dogkin men who wear silver clothes are standing while being bathed in moonlight. The kind-looking long-haired man talked to me.

"I do not have any intention to leave this planet."
"However, princess!"
"Please wait, Dober. First, let's hear the princess."
"However, Shiva!"

The long-haired man stopped the red-haired man who was pressing on me.

"Please tell us your reason. Is this savage planet more important than your home planet?"
"I have important companions here. And also, for the sake of the child in my stomach, I cannot leave this planet."

She pats the stomach that looks inconspicuous while she's sitting on the chair.

"That can't be, the miko of the great Ra Anubis to do something like having a child with the savage creature!"
"I, is that true princess?"

I nod at the two who are panicking.

◇

Pochi will not forget.

The taste of the first dried meat I eat. The happiness of grilled meat festival together with everyone.

Absolutely never forget.

◇

"Are you going no matter what?"
"Yes, I'm not the miko of Ra Anubis but Pochi Pendragon nano desu."

Yes, this place is important, along with that person.
As long as there are these two holy magic swords that he has forged, I can't let something like demon lord to keep doing as it pleases.

"We're also going together okay?"
"One for all~?"

Karina and Tama stand in my way when I'm about to depart.
We exchange high fives just like we've done in the battlefield a long time ago.

Now, let's board the world tree ship that Mia has prepared and embark toward hell!

Liza, please watch over us from beyond the star. We will surely take on your opponent.

◇

"Hou?　I have died in it huh?"

"Au, don't look nodesu. Prohibited nano desu."

Liza saw the written story that I wrote together with Arisa nodesu.

"Even Pochi didn't want to have you died nodesu. But, but, Arisa is."
"Is that so, Pochi is laying the blame on Arisa huh."
"Au, au, I'm not nodesu, I'm not nodesu~"

When we were debating who was going to die, we did it inadvertently nodesu. I'm reflecting on it, so please forgive me nodesu.
I've prepared myself for the meat to disappear at the dinner tonight, but Liza properly puts it like usual nodesu.

Liza is gentle after all nodesu.

When the next story needs a killing, I'll have Arisa as the victim nodesu. Arisa will surely forgive me while laughing nodesu. She will right desu?

Intermission: Pochi and Picture Book

My favorite things are master and meat nano desu.

"Ara? Pochi hates me huh."

I'm not nodesu. I like Arisa too nano desu.

"Pochi hates Tama~?"
"Is that so, I am below meat huh."

Tama and Liza too, please wait nodesu.

"I see~ Pochi-chan likes meat more than everyone huh. It's unfortunate~ even though I've grilled a delicious steak."
"I express regret."
"Heartless."

Au, Lulu too, it's not like that nodesu. Nana and Mia too, please wait nodesu. But, meat is delicious nodesu. So delicious it makes me happy nano desu.

"Then, Pochi doesn't need us right. Good bye Pochi."

It's not like that nodesu. Wait nano desu.

◇

"Please don't go~, nano desu!"
"Uwah, I'm surprised. What's wrong Pochi. Did you see a strange dream?"

When I look around restlessly, Tama is sleeping on top of master's lap.
Is this the camping ground?

I went to sleep when I was on night guard duty nodesu.

"Everyone was bullying me nodesu."
"That was just a dream. Everybody loves Pochi, so it's alright okay."

Master gently hugs Pochi and pats my head and back. It feels good nodesu. I almost sleep in because it feels too good nodesu.

Swoosh! I take a pose to get me spirited and wake me up nodesu. I'm a disgrace of a slave if I leave the night watch duty to master alone nodesu. I can see that Tama is sleeping on master's lap, but Tama is surely only pretending to be asleep nodesu. She surely is, nano desu.

"I won't feel sleepy with this nodesu."
"It's fine to sleep if you're sleepy you know?"
"I'm alright nano desu."

However, the [Aspalegus Meat Roll] that we've eaten just now is too delicious, it's no good nodesu. Happiness with full stomach--

Ha!? Critically dangerous nodesu. I almost dozed off involuntarily nodesu. Arisa has said this, full stomach is the strongest enemy of drowsiness, she says.

It's reading time for a time like this nano desu.

"Master, I'd like you to read the picture book please nodesu."
"Nn? The picture book that Arisa's bought from the secondhand store huh? Hasn't Pochi become able to read now?"

This and that are different matters nodesu. It's essential for master to read it for me nano desu.

"Then, let's read it together."
"Yes, nano desu!"

■————————

A loo~ng, long time ago.
The seven gods came here together with the world trees from the world of

gods.

The gods planted the world trees on the earth, and taught everyone knowledges and words.

And then, everyone lived together in happiness, happily ever after.

————————■

"Not that nodesu, the story is not like that nodesu."

Master is not serious nano desu. I should protest firmly here nano desu.
Even though Pochi is hitting master softly, master only laughs without complaining that it hurts nodesu.
The master today is mean nano desu.

"I give, I give~ I'm going to read it properly, so forgive me."
"Being mean is no good nano desu. The next one is the last chance nano desu."
"Understood. I'll read it properly alright."

■————————

The people lived peacefully and prospered greatly at the feet of the eight world trees.
However, since when was it. There are nine gods in the world.

The eighth god is the god of dragon.
The god of dragon had been in the world before the seven gods came together with the world trees.
The god of dragon was a sleepyhead, it was sleeping even until the world had completely changed.

The god of dragon was very surprised when it finally woke up, but since it was a foolish god who didn't fuss over small things, it approved the agreeable seven gods and got along with them.

However, the ninth god was different.

————————■

"Master, why does it use [Hashira] instead of [Hito] nano desu?"
<TLN: This is impossible to translate in English, Japanese uses counter words to count objects. In this case the book use [Hashira] to count gods, and [Hito] to count people. Satou-sensei will explain next.>
"I wonder? We learn to do it like that. Birds use [Hane], rats use [Hiki] right? Different counters are used for different objects."

As expected of master nano desu. I don't really understand, but I feel like I've understood nodesu.

"Thank you nano desu. Please read the continuation nodesu."

When I push the picture book to master, he says [Ow, ow] and laughs. When I see master's smile, I feel happy nodesu.

■————————

The ninth god was a demon god that had traveled from another world.
The demon god was really spoiled, it couldn't stand not being the best, and always tried to pick a fight with the other gods.

It couldn't be helped that the demon god became envious when it saw the other gods were surrounded by various people and mythical beasts.
The demon god created demons to have them revere itself. The demons and their creator, the demon god, bullied the other races around.

The troubled gods protested to the demons and demon god to not act violently, but they were completely ignored.

Too bad so sad, and then, the world was destroyed.

————————■

"Mou, master is a bully nodesu. Not reading the picture book properly, bad, nano desu."

Even though I'm scolding master, he's giggling.
Is he really repenting desu?

"I am repenting, I'll read it properly this time."
"You have to absolutely nano desu. Let's do pinky promise nodesu."

We link our little finger and make a pinky promise nodesu.
Master's finger is slender and beautiful nodesu.

I'll boast it to Arisa later nodesu.

■————————

One day, a tragedy occured.
The demons that had gone wild laid their hands on the dragons and the dragon god who were sleeping. The dragons who got their pleasant sleeps disturbed violently raged, every demon were burned by the breath of the dragons.
And unfortunately, at the same time, the other races were also burned together.

The demon god was also chased by the dragon god, but the demon god who was quick at running away continued to elude the dragon god for 100 years, and finally, the dragon god got tired and went back to the dragon valley.

The gods said to the dragon god that it was too excessive, but the dragon god who was half-asleep swung its tail once and blew away the gods to beyond the mountains.

Ever since that time, the demons never approach the dragons, and bully the weaker ones stealthily.

The weakest and most bullied one, the human race, asked the young goddess for the power to fight against the demon.

The young goddess was very troubled.
That is because the young goddess didn't have power to fight. The troubled young goddess consulted with the other gods, but every one of them only nods their heads while uh-huh-ing without trying to do anything.

The young goddess went to consult the strongest one, the dragon god. Of course, she couldn't borrow the power of the dragons. If she did that, the damage would be greater than letting the demons going wild.

At first the dragon god was unwilling to help, but since it liked the human toys and liquor that the young goddess had brought, the dragon god taught her one magic.

That was the magic to summon a hero.

It was the magic of hope.

————————■

"Pochi also wants to be summoned nodesu! And then I'll become a hero nodesu!"
"That's right, if it's Pochi, she will become a hero someday."

Muu, master answered vainly nodesu.
Pochi knows nodesu.

Not good desu. Truly not good nodesu.

Master has closed the pattern and the picture book nodesu.

No nano desu!
After this, it'll be the part about the hero's heroic tales nano desu.
I protest by clinging on master's neck, and look up at master's face, but master isn't looking here nodesu. Master? Pochi is over here nano desu.

"Good morning, master."
"Good morning, Lulu. Liza and Nana are tired from the special training

yesterday, so let them keep sleeping, I'll help with the breakfast today.
Pochi, do you have any request?"

Meal from master!
That is the essential wonder nano desu.

I don't have to think for the re-quest nodesu.

"Meat!"

When I declare so vigorously, master laughs nodesu.

Today is also a really good day nano desu!

Intermission: The Agony of a Transported Person

I thought I could do anything alone.

Who made me the meal, who gave me games and phones, I didn't appreciate those kind of things, thinking that they were givens.

I wonder, was that why?

I was different than the classmates around me. I had come to think so without any ground.
Of course, I felt that exerting effort was uncool, so I did nothing but raising my gaming skill. Flaming on bulletin boards behind anonymity was also my specialty.

Maybe because no one wanted to associate with such a person, far from friends, my own families were even distancing themselves from me. Mysteriously, I didn't get bullied.

For those reasons, I started playing wish-fulfillments galge, and got into things where the protagonists were unparalleled or reincarnated. Particularly the reincarnation plot, I collected various knowledges from the net to prepare for when I got summoned someday. After copying the collected informations, I wrote it down on a notebook. Since electricity might not exist on the world where I'd get transported. I filled the notebook with a lot of those knowledge in messy writings.

Come now, princess of a different world. I'm okay with getting summoned anytime!

Mouth is the origin of misfortune. These words come home to me these days.

◇

It suddenly becomes dark, and I'm inside a room made from bricks.
Oy, oy, where the heck is this?

Not. Of course I know. Obviously.

The room is dim, and the lights from candles are flickering. They're not light from magic.
Oops, I shouldn't forget about my favorite reincarnation works. First, I have to observe [People]. I frantically keep my eyes on the faces of the people here. Who are my allies, who are in agreement with the summoning, and against it. Observing them. Right now, that's the only thing I can do. That's why I'm observing.

There are three women who wear miko-like clothes, and six men who looks like soldiers. The other people are two civil officials-like old men, and a sly glasses-wearing good-looking guy, he's an enemy. It's decided.
Ack, a weasel is standing upright and talking about something. Beastman should just have different ears and tail. I'm okay with paws too.

My people observation is forced to stop.

"●●●●、●●●.●●●●●●●●●"

When that person is talking, my cool style instantly evaporates.

Oh, geezuz!

My head becomes blank, I can't think of anything. I can only stare at that woman wholeheartedly. It might be some kind of magic attack or mind attack.

But, whatever.

Right now, staring at her is justice.

A maid-looking woman is giving me something.
You, outta the way. Get away. Look, you're hiding her hair. She pushes me something on my hand, but as long as she's not obstructing the view, that's

fine.

"Do you understand what I'm saying?"

I do, but so what?
Is there any meaning to that for enjoying her beauty.

"What should we do your highness. The translation ring might be malfunctioning."
"My, that's troubling. What should we do?"

The beauty's troubled face also looks beautiful.
I want to see more expressions on her face.

"Your highness, the result from the Yamato stone that he's touched earlier has come out."
"And it is?"
"He's like the two before. He has an unusual 『Burying』 skill, but there's no unique skill."
"Does it match the kingdom's interest?"
"Unfortunately...."
"Is that so."

I heard something bad. What the heck is "The two before". Am I the third one? I shouldn't say, "It's because I'm probably the third" right?
Furthermore, what is kingdom's interest? What's with that remark when you've gone and kidnapped people without permission.

Just like how a young man usually react, I'm also boiling in anger for a moment.
However, that was poured with cold water due to the existence of the guarding soldiers. The swords on their waist and the spears look real.

If I'm to attack, now is not the time.
This is a composed investigation. It's not because I'm scared of the soldiers' swords at all. It's also not because the glances from the soldiers are saying as if they'll kill me if I move. It's the result of a cool investigation through and through. I'm going coolly. Coolly.

I keep staring at the violet-haired woman. She's too beautiful it's hard to live. I wonder how old is she? She looks like a high schooler, but she's probably older right? I want to tell her that her twin-tail will look good tied with thin ribbons, but the soldiers' glances are scary. It feels like they'd slay me for rudeness without warning.

◇

In the end, the kidnapper lots treat me as if I'm air the whole time, and a maid escorted by two soldiers guides me to a three tatami-wide small room. The room is only lit by one candle on a candlestick.

"The person in charge of training you will come tomorrow morning, wait here. I'll bring you something to eat later, so be quiet okay?"

A maid of around 20 years old talks to me condescendingly and leaves.

It's probably going to be black bread and lightly salted soup right?
I want to see her bringing imperial court cooking.

When I see the dish that the maid's brought, I regret the curse that I've said in mind earlier.

Don't make fun of me fantasy.

What the heck is dinner with one potato! Moreover it's raw! You're killing my stomach!

Since I can still feel that there are guards outside the room, I swallow my complaints. The maid seems to misunderstand it.

"Ara? Are you really that hungry? I'll prepare another one for the breakfast tomorrow, so you can eat that whole. You don't need to hold back."

The girl said so without sarcasm, put a water jug on the side table and left.
Oy, oy, there's no cup here.

I'm not hungry enough to eat a raw potato, so I drink the water directly from the jug to quench my throat.
My mouth longs for something, so I throw a candy that I've always readied in my pocket inside it. Other things that I've brought are a swiss army knife, the three candies that are the most important, and a notebook written with cheat about administration.

After getting some sugar supplies, I'm able to think this a bit more carefully.

First, let's check if cheats dwell in my body.

By simply doing push-up. I'm downed before the tenth just like usual. I don't have a body reinforcement cheat.

I take out the swiss army knife, imagine a virtual goblin and swing the knife. I feel empty in the middle of doing it, I don't have a swordsmanship or martial arts cheat either.

There should be magic at least, since I was summoned after all. My last hope, I try magic cheat. Imagine it. I imagine flame and put my hands toward the desk.

It's cold. My heart is cold.

This is a world without magic huh. I've decided so.

That means, I stay like what I've always been. Summoning magic, do your work.

Fuhn, there is no apology from the god, and I begin to vaguely notice. Reality is different than delusion. I am allowed to despair for a bit right? I'm already tired. I'm sleepy.

◇

When I notice a certain thing, I immediately stand up.

That's right, this is a hard mode world. It might be a cripplingly very hard world even. It's still too early to rest.

I investigate the informations that I've got in hands.

I got summoned. The summoner is probably that girl.

They call the violet twin-tail beauty your highness, she's probably a royalty.

Who were the "Two before" that the sly-glasses mentioned. Were they summoned people like me?

I recall the look on the soldiers' eyes. Those guys were obviously wary of me. That means, the previously mentioned two summoned people have done something bad. They couldn't have hugged that beauty right.

No, the thing they were wary about was not that kind of thing.

That's right, it's [Skill]. Those guys unmistakably said that. They said that I have skill. It was [Burying] wasn't it? It's really like me, sweats will come out of my eyes.

How do I use it?
I recite Burying inside my heart. I somehow feel like my presence becomes thinner. Wait, isn't it just like always.

While becoming slightly sad, I get out of the room.
I've thought that there's a sentry, but there's no one outside the room.

If I didn't think like a child and went to explore the castle here, my future might have been slightly different.

However, there is no IF in reality. You can only choose once.

And then I've heard it.

I have heard it.

The two summoned people before me were deemed to be unsuitable for

heroes and executed. The maids and soldiers talk about it without having any sense of guilt.

That's bullshit!

After you've abducted them like that. If they're unnecessary, send them back to their world.

◇

Unable to go back to my room, I wander around the castle and meet a girl. I try to block her mouth in a hurry, but get pinned down by her self-defense-like moves instead.

She's strong, belying her delicate look. Why did I use polite speech.
<TLN: The first line is said in keigo/polite speech.>

"Keep quiet. The soldiers will come if you're noisy. You're the person from the different world that Yuriko-sama has summoned today right?"

The girl is called Menea, a princess of this kingdom. I'm told that Yuriko is the violet-haired twintail beauty, her aunt. Eternally 17 years old huh. I understand.

In exchange for some informations, I got informations out of her.
I shouldn't have heard it. There is no method to return to my original world. Are they calling and leaving huhh.

When we talk about the fate of the two summoned people before me, she becomes upset. It seems that she spent some times with the two on the city outside the castle.

I desperately try to get her sympathy, and ask about the ways to get out of the castle. It has been since the examination for high school that I try so hard like this.

I got fruits and jeweled ring for trading with money from her. Since she

doesn't seem like she's directly involved with the kidnapping, I want to repay the favor, so I give her two pages of the administrative cheat from the notebook. I've memorized the content of those pages. Don't belittle a student with free time.

◇

I light the torch that I've got from Menea with a lighter.
Even though I've been suspected of smoking by the teacher, and questioned by patrolling police and other doubts because of this, I keep carrying it.

I'll use [Burying] until I arrive at the town at night.

Fufufu, I'll register at the adventure guild in the town, and seize my success story from there on. Different world dream, come on.

I don't hear the sounds of insects.

I know.
This is not an easy mode world. It's a crazy hard real different world. Of course, there are monsters too.

However, seriously spare me from getting attacked by a praying mantis the size of a human being.

I desperately run away, but I've not thought that running on the mountain at night would be this hard. I couldn't even run away for several meters and got caught. My left arm is bitten off in one gulp. It's hot rather than painful. I wonder if my adrenaline is pumped in tons, I don't feel much pain.

Ah, game over huh.
Even if I want to counter attack, I've dropped my torch somewhere.

The monster deliciously eats the left arm that's been torn off me. Even though I want to run, the monster pins down its leg on top of my stomach, so I can't move.
Ah, I'm bleeding too much.

My consciousness becomes hazy.
I hear a clamor in the end. I don't understand what they're saying. Oh right, I've put the translation ring on the finger of my left hand.

The last thing that I see is a dark brown skin with long ears.
It's here, a dark elf in flesh.

I've thought that my life is a kusoge, but I see something good in the end.
I wanted to TUEE with a dark elf serving me.
<TLN: TUEE is a slang for, err, basically OP? kusoge=trash game.>

I will become black knight the next time I'm reborn....

Death March

- Volume 8 -

8-1. At the Capital of the Duchy

Satou's here. Japanese people are world-famous for being impatient, but people of a parallel world aren't all easygoing either.

◇

"A peanut is flying nodesu!"
"Monster~?"

Pochi and Tama who have come from the ship's deck pull both of my sleeves and take me along to the deck.
There's a floating airship when I look at the place where the two are pointing. I've already checked it on the map, but it's quite impressive when you actually see the real thing. It's a 300 meters long peanut-shaped rigid airship. It's unknown whether it floats using gas like helium or magic tools. I can guess the airship's route from the map, it probably has arrived here from the royal capital this morning.

"That's an airship."
"Ayership?"
"Ships that fly in the sky."
"Amazing nodesu! I want to ride in it nodesu!"

Yup, me too.
If you think about it, the ship is probably for military affairs, so it's doubtful whether we can ride in it or not.

"Uwah. Truly a fantasy. I'm burning up~."
"I wonder how is it floating?"

Arisa and Liza have also come. This is the first time Arisa sees it huh. I wonder if she hasn't ridden in the exclusive airship of the hero?

"Master, I wish for that."

"Ufufu, the shape is quite cute isn't it."

Nana is gesturing like she's trying to reach and grasp the airship with her hands. Lulu says 'cute', is that cute? I don't really understand, maybe because our senses are different.

"Arisa can just make a cushion with that shape later right? On top of being cute, it'll also be soft."

Nana plops her hands once, and goes to pester Arisa. She hugs Arisa from behind, and speaks intensely about how cute the airship is. Arisa will probably yield before long. Since Nana absolutely won't give up when she's like that.

"Master, I've inquired Shelna-dono, and it seems that demi-humans aren't welcomed in the inner part of the big wall. I think it's better for Pochi, Tama, and Mia to put on overcoats before we enter the port."
"Right, I'll tell them after their euphoria from the airship have receded."

Shelna-dono that Liza's mentioned is the tour guide. Her main occupation is one of the civil official of the viceory of Gururian city--earl Walgock. I thought that she was the viceroy's watchdog when I discovered it from AR, but it seemed she just missed the time when was working as a tour guide for earning her school expense since she was young, so she replaced the tour guide.

At the duchy capital, we get to stay in the mansion of earl Walgock, thanks to the goodwill of the viceroy. I'm fine with staying at a normal inn, but since the martial tournament is open, there aren't probably many decent places left, so I decide to receive the favor.

The ship that we're boarding heads toward the port of the duchy capital. It's not the port on the downtown, but the one built inside the capital great wall for nobles' and purveyors' use.
By great wall I'm naturally talking about Oyugock city outer wall. It seems that the population has increased too much, and so, in order to settle down the people in the suburbs, they've created a three meters tall wall called new wall outside. The new wall is unlike an actual great wall as it cannot protect against monsters' attacks, so the area inside the great wall becomes

inhabited only by nobles, the wealthy and technicians, while people like workers, demi-humans, and the poor are living outside of it.

◇

After we have disembarked, we are being guided by Shelna-san toward the mansion of earl Walgock.
Thanks to the pass from the viceroy, we aren't checked during the inspection for entering the city. However, I feel like there are too few guards at that time. When I check on the map, it looks like the guards are running around inside city.

The cause is probably the corpses of the members, and specific things that show their positions that I've left inside the castle covered with sheets after defeating the demon lord last night. Since I left them with the [Wings of Liberty] clothings and their plan of resurrecting the demon lord, the soldiers are probably cleaning up the aftermath. Work hard.

I could arrest the remaining members and hand them over to the authority, but since it's troublesome, I leave them alone. The woman that has got her attire taken by me seems to have been rescued by her friends, and she's now among the gathering in the mansion of a noble called earl Bobi. It'd be bothersome if they cause disturbances so I mark it.

The mansion of earl Walgock is in an area that is wide even among the noble area inside the great wall.
After I have finished greeting the previous earl Walgock together with Shelna-san, the two of us go to the duke's castle with the carriage that she's taken out from the mansion. Shelna-san is quite an energetic person.
I myself am fine since my stamina is overflowing, but Mia and Arisa don't have much stamina, so I tell them to be at leisure in the mansion today. They won't be able to meet the duke even if we go together anyway, so there's no particular problem. Lady Karina has invited Pochi and Tama for training on the courtyard. She's probably quite frustrated since she couldn't move her body too much at the ship. Liza and the maids are accompanying them, so they probably won't cause an uproar.

The duke's castle is as vast as baron Muno's, but there are wide differences in the splendors and the number of present people.
Over the castle walls inside, there are four 4 meter tall iron golems stationed around the castle gate. Looks like the castle walls are connected with various anti-aircraft towers. I wasn't able to confirm what kind of artilleries are put in it. I'll ask them to let me see it later.

The wagon stops at the courtyard after crossing the inner wall earlier. It's walking from here. Guided by the maid, we're advancing through a corridor made with abundant of marbles. Carpets are spread below, and we come across decorations like artworks that are on the wall and flowers on regular interval. I don't understand the quality of the pictures, but they're good calming paintings.

Someone is waving hands inside a painting hanging on the wall along the way on the corridor.

As expected of fantasy. It's really like a magic item.

The little girl drawn on the painting is waving her hands. She looks delighted when I wave back. It's quite interactive. I'm expecting that there would be people moving inside other paintings, but unfortunately, they're all just normal paintings.

"Is there anything wrong Chevalier-sama?"
"No, it's nothing. As expected of duke-sama's castle. There's a fun magic item."
"That's right, I was also surprised when I came here for the first time."

No wonder. Anyone would be surprised if they saw someone moving inside a painting.

◇

We're led to a room and get to meet the consul aide.

"Well then, this is the letter from baron Muno. And then, this is the letter

from baron Muno's consul, viscount Rottol, for the consul-sama here."

I hand over two sets of letters. The letters from Nina-san are in the forms of three scrolls and one bundle of documents.
The consul aide receives that respectfully, and then someone who looks like the assistant put it on the rack. Shelna-san also has a letter from the viceroy to pass here, but she gives the bag that she's brought here to the assistant-san. I heard later that it was packed with reports from each departments.
A maid enters after getting permission by knocking the door and whispers something to the consul aide.

"Sir Pendragon, your excellency, the duke seems to want to meet you. Is it fine for you to go for a bit?"

Oh?
The plan today is to only pass over the letters, and the meeting will be for several days later I'm told.
Since this means that I won't have to trouble myself coming here twice, I gladly accept it. I don't have the right to refuse in the first place anyway, the invitation is probably just a formality from the opposite.

I've thought that we'd be guided to the audience room, but we pass over it and proceed to what seems to be the private room of the duke.
The room earlier is gorgeous, but this one is two grades higher. The chair that I'm offered to sit isn't too hard or too soft, it's a superb fit. I've wanted this kind of chair in my workplace. There is a water tank on one side of the room, and tropical fish-like fish are swimming inside. Their shapes looks like guppy, but they're dimly shining light green light from the inside of their semi-transparent bodies.

There are four statues of nude women on the corners of the room, they're all Living Statues. There's a passage that leads to several soldiers that are standing by in a waiting room, although it's been skillfully concealed. There are three magic soldiers on the roof standing by. There doesn't seem to be any movable gimmick, so they probably would break through the roof if there was an emergency.
They've put some considerations for making sure that normal people won't be able to sense the existences of those guards. They don't seem to have any intention of needlessly intimidating guests.

The room maid announces that the duke is coming here from the next room, so I stand up to receive him.
The one who comes into the room is an old man with good physique and with entire body hair in white. His hair is plentiful, but his beard is even more so. He looks like a good-natured man, but the glints on his eyes are too powerful. As the proof, Shelna-san who's together with me has completely stiffened. The one who comes after the duke is probably the consul. He has blond hair with gray ones mixed and slender build. He looks like an able man with thin eyes.

"Fumu, so you're the rumored hero-dono who saw through the demon's trick, and protected baron Muno territory from monsters led by the demon huh. You're young."

After we give our each other names, the consul speaks first. Young? Oh right, my appearance is that of a 15 years old. Mirrors are rare so I've forgotten.

"On top of that, it seems that you've exterminated the demon that has appeared in our territory's Gururian city. Allow me to thank you."

When it's spoken like that, it's as if I'm the perpetrator who has instigated the demons in order to be promoted.

"It is surely because of the people who have fought earlier, and the beast people subordinates of mine. I cannot win against the demon if it's just me alone."
"Modesty is unnecessary. A letter of recommendation for you to participate in the second qualifier has arrived from earl Walgock."

Viceroy-san, I'd have liked if you inform me first when you were sending a letter of recommendation.
I gently decline it of course since I don't have any intention of participating.

"Is that so, that's too bad. So, I've summoned you here to tell you something about baron Muno."

I wonder what? Don't tell me that the demons are attacking the territory

again.

"Your excellency, he would misunderstand if you said it like that."
"Really? It's a good story. It's been decided that baron Muno will be raised to Earldom during the kingdom's spring meeting. There is no custom of a noble getting raised two ranks so there was some disputes, but he has piled up quite enough achievements."

He's originally been decided to be raised in rank, but since there's enough achievement just right, it's been hastened. The territory won't be particularly expanded, but the advantage is that the territory won't be made light by the neighboring territories.

"You don't seem to have much desire in getting success in life."
"Desire to successful in life is it? I think the current honorary knight is already quite excessive for me."

Apparently, there's a talk for me to become a honorary baron in addition with baron Muno's. Lords are allowed to assign honorary knight and knight peerage, but it seems that honorary baron and above are the king's privilege. Honestly, I'm not interested in raising the rank or something, so I safely pass on it.
From this on, replacing the duke, the consul comes ahead to talk about the real issue.

"I don't think that you, Sir, knows, but every towns have been attacked by a lower demon like the one that has attacked Gururian city."

I do know, but normally one wouldn't, so I put on a slightly surprised face.

"Only Gururian and Standel cities have escaped with little damage. The other cities have suffered damage that will take several years to recover. We cannot confirm if the upper demon like the one that's attacked Seryuu city last month appears, but mid demons have appeared in other Earls' territories."

If an upper demon attacks, a city would surely vanish, but if it's just a lower demon, then people who are capable of defeating it should exist. The damages may have been done before the capable person comes huh. I could

sort of understand why the viceroy was awfully kind.

The demons' damages have increased in various places, so they want to gather people who can defeat demons it seems. I think there are some problems in soliciting other lord's retainers, but since the duke's influences are too far apart, it seems that it's possible for me to be transferred. I don't have that in mind, so I decline in a way that won't create hard feelings.

They want to hear my wish for the rewards of saving Gururian city, so I ask permissions to buy attack-related scrolls, and magic tools, and they agree to it easily. When I talk about it to Arisa later, she says that maybe they want to avoid expenses from the available cash since they need it for restorations of various places. I see.
While I'm at it, under the pretext of 'for the sake of Muno city from now on', I got permit to go on inspections of all kinds of workshops. I very much look forward to have a field trip on workshops like the Oak glass workshop.
<TLN: 'Oak' can also be read 'Orc'.>

◇

"Haah, that was tense."
"You're right."
"How can you say that. Wasn't chevalier-sama looking very normal in front of duke-sama?"

That's thanks to Poker Face. In truth, even though I remember the second half of the conversation, it didn't feel real to me.

When we've come to the courtyard to get on the wagon, I notice that there's something strange.
Everyone is looking at the sky.

"Chevalier-sama, please have a look at that."

I look at where Shelna-san points. I use my hand as a shade since it's in front of the light. I have no need of shading since I have the light intensity adjustment skill, but my hand has moved out of habit.

Putting aside such trivial things, that descends from the sky.

8-2. Visitor from the Sky

Satou's here. Impossible setting like woman warriors wearing bikini armors exist in video games, but as expected, there is no warrior who wears bikini armor in the parallel world.

◇

The visitor that falls from the sky breaks its speed just before it hits the ground.

"Thank you for welcoming me!"

The girl takes off her helmet, and her silver hair appears as if flowing. When she get off the golem that's modeled after a pegasus, the heels on her metal armor lets out clear sounds. It doesn't seem to be an armor made from normal iron.

"Princess!"
"Ringrande-sama!"

The people on the courtyard call her "Ringrande".

The girl who comes down from the sky by riding a pegasus is Ringrande Oyugock. A follower of Hayato Masaki, the hero. Her level is 55. Judging from her skills composition, she's more like a magic warrior than a magician.

She's 22 years old, her eyes are somewhat tsurime, and with the thin eyebrows, she's an intense beauty.
<TLN: google tsurime, it's kinda hard to describe but quite obvious when you see images of it.>
Her armor is unlike the unrefined lump of metal that soldiers are wearing, it's shaped with womanly lines. If her armor curves aren't exaggerated, then she's about E cup. I'll remake Nana's armor with lady Ringrande's armor as

a reference.

I don't know why a grandchild of one of the leading figures of Shiga kingdom has become a follower of Saga empire's hero, but judging from the reactions of the people on this square, she seems to be very popular.

"She's quite popular eh."
"Are chevalier-sama not familiar with her?"

Shelna-san clutches her fists in front of her chest, and I listen to her curiously.
I nod to her who seems to be setting up the mood, and learn various things about lady Ringrande.
Lady Ringrande is the granddaughter of the duke, the fourth daughter of the next duke, and her mother is the daughter of Shiga kingdom's king who has been married into his subject. The kind of lineage that'd ensure her to inherit the peerage.
She had been overflowing with talent since she was 10 years old, and skipped grades to study at the royal Oritsu academy. She's a talented girl who has obtained the bachelor's degree in two years, and mastered wind and fire magic until the advanced levels. She's still in the academy even after she obtained her degree, and for three years until she's 15, she continued polishing her magic in the labyrinth city while also continuing her research. She's a genius magician who has revived the explosion, and the destruction magic that had been considered to be lost. Additionally, it seems she has been given honorary baronet peerage for all those achievements.
Looks like she's also learned swordsmanship in the labyrinth city, but Shelna-san doesn't seem to know it well.

When she's 18 years old, such woman ran away to serve the hero of Saga empire which caused quite a bit of uproars. Since I don't have any interest in that matter, I just response agreeably to Shelna-san without really hearing it.

It seems that it's been two years since she last comes home.

◇

Since Shelna-san looks like she wants to join the people who surrounds lady Ringrande, I give her permission. Looks like she's been ordered by the viceroy to attend us during our stay after she's given the report to the duke, but since we've already finished the task that has to be completed as early as possible, it's fine for her to have some time off. Just be prepared for the tour around various workshops from tomorrow on.

I ask the footman who's standing by on the entrance to call the carriage that I've ridden.
It's troublesome to ask people's help every time I need to do something. Since it's NG for me to do it myself, Nina-san has told me to get accustomed to it even though it's troublesome.

I have the carriage go to the area where magic shops and bookstores are gathered. There are magic shops in the downtown, but for now I head toward the one close to the castle.

When I notice the people inside, I've thought of going to the magic shops in the downtown instead, but since it'd be too suspicious, I give up.

"Oh, if it isn't Satou-dono."
"Hmm, are you Toruma's acquaintance?"
"Umu, I've told you before right? To the whole 10.000-strong monsters army that attacked Muno city, he's--"

The people inside the magic shop are a man who looks to be the shop manager, and Toruma ossan. The shop manager is a man so muscular you wouldn't think he's a magic shop manager. His stern face looks like he's suited to carry a pickaxe or a great sword on his shoulder.

The shop manager is joyfully listening to the exaggerated story of Toruma while grinning. He probably regards it as Toruma's usual boasting. It doesn't seem like he takes it seriously.

"My name is Kikinu. It sounds strange since I'm born in a small country to the east, but don't mind it. If it's hard for you to pronounce it, you can call me, Kinniku, Oyaji, or Shop manager any one you want."

"Pleasure to meet you. My name is Satou."
<TLN:Kinniku=muscle, oyaji=old man, boss, or father depending on the context.>

Toruma who's being treated like an air says "Chi chi chi" while swaying his finger. What, I can't help but wanting to smack him.

"You have to properly give your house name okay?"

I didn't tell him my house name since I wanted us to talk without reservation, but he's a KY guy like always.
<TLN: KY=Kuuki Yomenai, can't read the atmosphere/mood.>

"Excuse me. I'm Satou Pendragon."
"Hou? I can see that you like heroes tales."
"His master is baron Muno, also known as associate baron Donan back then."
"That's, a misfortune huh."

To be so widely known, just how much you like heroes, baron Muno.

"No, ultimately, the one who've chosen it is myself."
"Well, only people who share the same interest will understand it, so it's probably alright."

I see, shop manager Kikinu is the same kind of person as baron Muno huh.
I chat adequately to liven things up, and ask about the line up of the magic books and the scrolls.

A lot of things are the same as the ones from Gugurian city magic shop, but as expected of the magic shop in a metropolis, it's quite complete.

"This book is nice."
"That so? It's a book that only sells one copy in several years, but it's good that you like it. It's an indispensable dictionary for magic tools appraiser, but since the only ones who'd buy it are people who have appraisal skill, it's become fertilizer for the bookshelf."

I can read the magic items inside my storage with this.

There are magic books for magic that Shelna-san has mentioned earlier, explosion and destruction magic. Due to their contents, the magic books are something that can only be sold to people authorized by the military, but thanks to the permit I've got from the duke, I can buy it without problem.

There are also various books with titles that fascinate me like, "Magic Tools and Carved Seal Magic", "30 Magic Circuit Standards for Magic Tools", "In-Depth Learning from the Basic for Cane and Catalyst", "Gems and Magic Cores", so I buy them all.

"Young master, how about this book?"

Shop manager Kikinu presents, "Rotation and Roman", "The Meeting of Rotation and Round Trip Movement", "New Magic Born from Rotation", books that excessively push rotation topics. Since the author is the same one who has created the magic spinning disk I've bougt back then, I decide to buy them. The shop manager Kikinu's face which somehow looks amazed catches my eyes. Did he think that I wouldn't buy them? That can't be, he's the one who recommends it himself.
I've also bought many other books, but there's nothing that talks about making scrolls.

On the other hand, there are plentiful of scrolls.
It seems that Toruma is here to sell the scrolls door-to-door since it's difficult for him to stay in his parent's house.

"You don't have to buy them here, you can buy them from our workshop right?"
"Oy, oy, Toruma. Don't take away my customer."
"I'd like to get extraordinarily unusual scrolls from Toruma-san's parent house, so this is fine."

Rather than unusual scrolls, I intend to custom order peculiar magic for the scrolls that can't be bought, so I'll buy the ones that can be bought from stores beforehand.

Generally, here, the scrolls that can be normally traded are similar with the ones sold in other cities, but I get to buy various battle-related scrolls for military use. They seem to be mostly used as substitutes for when there are

shortage of magicians, and insurances that magicians carry around with elements they can't use.

There's also the magic that the fire magician viscount-san has used in the Seryuu city labyrinth back then, Fire Storm. If I have this intermediate magic, I wonder if it'd be easier to fight against a demon lord?

Elementary level magic scrolls are cheap, but intermediate level scrolls are worth several pieces of gold coin, so even if people carry it around for insurance, won't they feel reluctant to use it? I'm thinking that low level people might be able to use it for power leveling, but since it can't be invoked if their magic power aren't enough, it's probably impossible.

"Are you going to carry the goods yourself? If you tell me your lodging location, I could deliver it to you in the evening y'know?"
"Then, please deliver them to earl Walgock's mansion."
"Oh? I've thought that you'll stay in my parent house, but you're acquainted with earl Walgock huh?"
"Yes, there were a bit of things."

I leave the delivery to manager Kikinu. Looks like I can pay at that time. It's a pain to carry around gold coins in large quantities, so payment bill probably becomes the standard.

◇

Afterward, guided by Toruma, I go around many magic shops and bookstores.
I looked tepidly at Toruma who said such line like, "This city is like my backyard.", but it was the truth without exaggeration. We're going around the city through strange alleys, or garden yard inside other people's houses. Rather than back streets, they seem to be courses that a brat would prefer. I've returned the carriage that I've ridden, so we ride the cab carriage when it's far.

In the secondhand bookstore at the downtown, Toruma skillfully persuades the obstinate-looking old man shopkeeper to make him takes out the

treasured book. He's good for this kind of negotiation. It seems he's been doing this many times before when he's buying erotic books long ago. Really like Toruma ossan.

Of course the book that has come out is not an erotic book. It's a magic book of space magic. Although it only lists the chants until intermediate level, and things like explanation of the effects, or description of the theory are completely absent. I buy it while convincing myself that it'd be just like disassembling binary codes.
The used scrolls for maniacs have already been sold, so I buy several scrolls with magic that aren't listed in the spell books. I have to compile the spell books later.

◇

"Ara, what a lovely boy."
"Right, if he has more muscle, he'd feel even better to touch right?"

Why is this happening.

"Ara, no way. Try to touch him, his muscles are like steel."
"You're right, even his abs is ripped."

I mildly avoid the hands that are groping my body.

"Ara, meany."
"You're quite strong ne."
"Oy, oy, don't only service Satou-dono, please care for me too."
"Ara, no way. Toruma-san is jealous."

I felt bad if I leave Toruma just like that after he had thoroughly guided me, so I thought of treating him to a meal at least, but he somehow guided me to this establishment.

An okama bar is completely unexpected.

"I mean, Hayuna would get angry if I go to an establishment with women."

So he said.

If Shelna-san who was worried didn't come to pick me, I might be there until morning.
Everyone's glances are painful when I've returned, so I decide to go shopping with everyone tomorrow. Since Oyugock city is relatively warm, it might be a good idea to buy clothes for spring.

8-3. Downtown Disturbance

Satou's here. The only field trip I had ever done in Japan was to a beer factory where I could try some freshly made samples. I wonder why was the beer I drank in that factory so delicious.

◇

Here, here, the little girl inside the painting is beckoning.
As if led by that gesture, my hand approaches.

The painting where she is in has a lone door drawn on a field, it's a mysterious oil painting. The girl opens that door and enters, then she beckons from beyond that door.

I stretch my hand toward the frame of that painting--

◇

"Morning~?""Nano desu!"

Something made a little impact on my stomach along with cheerful voices.

When I slightly open my eyes, there are Pochi and Tama who have dived beside my stomach. The impact on my stomach seem to be from their arms that have ridden on it.

What a strange dream.
Last night, since I've got myself a book that can help decipher the explanation on magic tools, I've sorted the magic tools until dawn, I wonder that's the reason I see that dream?

"Good Morning."

I greet the two and pat their heads while messing with it a bit. Maybe it's a bit too rough, the two hold my palms with both their hands and feet, and escape. I pretend to feel painful since they're play-biting.

"Mwuu."

Mia who's lying down rustles my head. Does she want to be cared, or is this a revenge for waking her up, it's a vague line.
Even though we're this noisy, Arisa is still sleeping beside me with anguished face. I wonder what kind of dream she's having.

Nana has come to tell us that the breakfast is ready, I wake Arisa up and go toward the dining room. It seems she's still sleepy, Arisa acts spoiled and says, "Carry me", so I take her on my shoulder to the dining room. Since Pochi and Tama are looking so enviously, I decide to carry the two on my shoulders after this.

◇

"Chevalier-sama, about the schedules for visiting the workshops--"

Yesterday, on the way to the duke's castle, I hear from Shelna-san that visiting workshops aren't something that can be done immediately, I have to make prior appointments beforehand. Therefore, Shelna-san has got the reservations for us.
Excluding the visit to the scroll workshop of viscount Shimen, Toruma's parent house, that'll be in 10 days, we can visit other workshops in 2-5 days time. The visit to the scroll workshop is so late because we have to wait for viscount Shimen to return from the royal capital first.

"Well then, is it alright for Chevalier-sama and Karina-sama to attend the dinner tonight?"
"Of course, it's alright desuwa."

Lady Karina answered Shelna-san's question faster than me.

The dinner she's talking about is about the invitation from the previous earl Walgock couple. Moreover, I've also been invited to a party organized by the duke three days later. I feel like some kind of disturbances will happen, am I just being paranoid I wonder?

I'm fine with Nana as my partner for the dinner, but since she's less accustomed on the etiquette than lady Karina--there are also some pushes from lady Karina's maids--it's become lady Karina instead. I'm more comfortable with taking Lulu, but since Lulu doesn't look like she has resistance for those kind of things, I abandon the thought.

"Are you really not going to participate in the martial art tournament? If a noble appear in the second qualifier of the tournament, his social status will get considerably high..."
"I have no such intention."
"I understand. The arena for the tournament is in the town, and we've reserved a private room for noble visitor that Chevalier-sama can use anytime during the second qualifier. However, unfortunately, we aren't able to secure the private room for the main match, so we've reserved the seats in the shared room for nobles."

It seems it's fine to be be noisy in the private room, but it's NG to have the slaves and demi-humans make noise in the shared room. It'd be impossible for Pochi and Tama to not make noise when they see the tournament, so I'll go watch the main match alone in secret. Looks like the second qualifier will be held in five days.

◇

By borrowing two four-seater carriages, I go to the downtown together with everyone. Of course, I leave lady Karina behind.
We get off in the parking lot before the great wall, and walk from there.

"So many."
"That's right, due to the opening of the big tournament, this has become the melting pot of races."
"Melting pot~?"

"Is it delicious?"
"Ufufu, Pochi-chan is a glutton-san."

There are also a lot of people in the main street of the noble district, but it's jam packed in the downtown. There's a strange heat like you normally see in the Southeast Asia marketplace. Seemingly stirred by that, everyone is in high spirit more than usual.

First, let's buy thin clothes in the second-hand clothes store. Everyone beside Lulu and me is wearing an overcoat, it looks to be hot just seeing them. Liza reaches for a full metal armor. I tell her that lighter equipment is better, but since she insists, "It's the full dress of a guard", so I buy it as it is.

"Nice smell nano desu."
"Mumumu, this is! It's the smell of burnt soy sauce. This is, squid teriyaki, private Pochi, private Tama. Let's secure the urgent suspects at once~."
"Secure~."
"Aye, nano desu."

It does smell nice. Arisa leads Tama and Pochi running to the stall. Mia is tempted to run with the three, but she probably wouldn't be able to eat it. Liza and Lulu follow the children behind them while walking.

"Master, it's a state of emergency."

Nana murmurs so while taking my arm and leads me to the different direction than everyone's. I tell Lulu who has noticed us, "I'll come back soon". I have the map so I could join them back immediately.

There are ratmen children at the place where Nana pressingly pulls me. No wait, it seems to be different, their skins are glossy and their necks inverts when they're walking. According to the AR indication, they're Sea Lion kin.

"I cannot calculate the movement of that young organism. Even though it's not efficient, I cannot take my eyes off them."

It seems Nana has wanted to see these children. Certainly, one could say that their way of walking is cute. After she's admired them for some time, I'll take her back to everyone. My arm is happy, but it'll be bad if we leave

everyone too long and make them worry.

The moment of happiness suddenly ends.

◇

The instant Nana sees a big tigerkin man kicks the sea lionkin child, her atmosphere changed. Nana releases my arm, and jumps over the crowd of people and cut between the children and the big man.

It seems she's used body strengthening nature magic, but her activation time has become quite a bit faster. Wonder if it's because of her training with Liza and the others every day.

"What? A human huh? Get away woman."
"I refuse. I inform that excessive violence against young organism is dangerous, and is prohibited."

The big tigerkin man flaunts his arm--

"You bastard, when did you appear?"

I catch and stop his arm before he could swing it.

The big man scowls with sharp glint on his eyes at me who's caught his arm from behind.

From what I saw, the sea lionkin child who didn't see where he was going hit the big tigerkin man, and the cause of this quarrel was because the man's trousers got stained.
Although, the man's trousers are already dirty enough you can't even tell if it has been stained further.

"You must not use violence."
"Is that so."

The big man kicks me while answering. I jump to avoid it and land before

the man. Of course, I'm still holding his arm.

Making use of abduction skill, I pin the big man down.
Right at that time, someone's great sword is swinging toward me.

"Master, it's a reinforcement."

Due to space grasp and crisis perception skills, I've noticed it even if I don't hear Nana's warning, so I ward off the great sword with the fairy sword on my waist while still pining the big man down.

"Hou? You've eluded the sword of this great me while pining Geri huh."

A pure white tigerkin man appears from the darkness of the alley. However, swinging sword in the downtown like this, he's not sane huh. I've done it myself, but this is an act of self-defense, so please overlook it.
The spectators around us are clamoring. It seems this guy is a participant of the second qualifier.

"You'd be wasting your turn in the second qualifier if you cause bloodshed in the town you know?"
"Fuhn, you're showing composure after receiving surprise attack in the downtown. You're also a participant of the second qualifier huh. Come to the final, we'll settle it there."

I feel like it'd be complicated if I answer, "I'm not" here. I'll reply it vaguely to lead him.

"I'm looking forward to it. Please do your best to win through it."
"Fuhn, your show is only for now."

I release the man that I've pinned down and step back once. I want them to leave while they're still misunderstanding. I don't want to attract more attention in this kind of place.
I show my composure while the white man takes the big man until they're gone.

The spectators seem to be dissatisfied for the non-fight, but I don't care.

"Master, master! The young organism is vomiting out fluid from his mouth. I appeal for the emergency treatment."

Since Nana appeals monotonously behind, I take out a magic potion from my pocket and make the sea lionkin child drinks it. He seems to have recovered immediately, I'm relieved. Shouts of joy break out from the spectators somehow.

The sea lionkin is really popular huh. Nana must be attracted.

That popular person keeps licking the bottle even after it's been emptied.
It's probably because I've put sweet flavor in the magic potion.
Nana holds the sea lion children up on her hands.

"Master, requesting to make these children become ours."
"No."
"Master, please reconsider."
"Rejected."

It's unusual for Nana to get depressed, but I can't compromise here.
When the sounds of some kind of bell is resounding, the children becomes flustered on Nana's arms, I instruct Nana to release them. She hesitates for a bit, but then she resigns herself and release them.

Somehow the children are going toward where Arisa and the others are, so we follow them along. It is not because Nana is leading me by hands, not at all. I'd like us to link arms if possible, but since Arisa and Mia would protest if they see it, it's fine like this.

There's an unexpected person at the destination of the children.

8-4. Downtown Disturbance (2)

Satou's here. Siblings that don't look alike exist anywhere, but even if they're raised in the same environment, the differences are there ever since they're born. The little sister who wants to surpass her big sister, and the big sister who wants to protect her little sister, those feeling may be the impetus to help them grow.

◇

There's a square just ahead where the sea lionkin children are going, it seems volunteers are distributing food there.

That's good and all, but.

"Line up properly nodesu! Cutting the line is bad, nodesu."
"Line up~ You ignorant people~."
"H, hey Tama-chan!"

For some reason, the figures of Pochi and the others as the volunteers who distribute the food are there.

"The last in line is here! Line up in three lines while carrying your own wooden bowl."
"You there, I'll put you to the end of the line if you're quarreling."

Looks like Arisa and Liza are in charge of the queues.
The sea lionkin children are lining up in accordance to Arisa's guidance.
Nana is going to line up behind them, but I stop her.

"Ara, master, what was Nana's errand?"
"We helped those children from a tigerkin man."
"Fuh~n, I thought that you two were shacking up somewhere."

If we were really shacking up, Mia would find me anywhere I am. Mia's

ability to find me can be called at superpower level, although she won't tell me how.

"What about you girls, how did you end up helping the queue?"
"It's just like master's. Some ruffians who didn't act their ages were cutting the line and making some fuss, so Pochi warned them, and then Liza suppressed the three ruffians who were in frenzy."

I see. I can somehow picture the scene in my head.

"That's fine, but then why is Lulu helping serving the food?"
"An old woman tried to stop the ruffians before Pochi, but she got injured by them."

The injury was immediately healed by Mia's and Arisa's magic, but she went home since she was shocked from the violence. Because of that, their hands were short, and so Lulu volunteered to help.

"It feels bad to stop halfway, so we will help for another hour, it's fine right?"
"Of course."

Mingling with the local people is also one of the true charm of sightseeing.
I guess I'll go help too with the cooking. I was going to bring Nana along, but since she was going crazy with the sea lionkin children, I left her.

"Lulu, is there anything I can help?"
"Ah, master! Sera-sama, this is my master, Satou Pendragon-sama."

Yes, the one there is the demon lord sacrifice, the miko from Tenion temple, Sera. However, to go on a volunteer work after she's just been abducted by a suspicious organization like this, is there no one who's worried about her?
No, there are some duke's people among the crowds slightly away from here. She's a lure to fish out 『Wings of Liberty』 huh.

Putting that aside, my eyes are happy when she's standing next to Lulu.
They totally look like some idol unit.

"Nice to meet you, Chevalier Pendragon-sama. I am a miko of Tenion

temple, Sera--."

It seems she's progressing well after the revival.
She reflexively greets when Lulu introduces me to her, but she's tilting her head for some reason.

"Um, we've met somewhere haven't we? I'm sorry, but my memory is a bit vague..."

Don't tell me, she has some memory left from when she's possessed by the demon lord. It sound like a pick-up line if you just look at the words. I stop being self-conscious, and go on to deceive her.

"No, this is the first time we've met. Sera-sama."
"Is it so I wonder..."

Looking puzzled is fine and all, but why is she staring at me. When I look at this person, it somehow reminds me of princess Menea. Their proportion and face are different, yet why.

"Sera-sama, the people are tired of waiting for the food."
"Ara, I mustn't."

It's bad to keep the people waiting, so I urge Sera to go back to work distributing the food.
The content of the pot for the food is soup of water plant that looks like seaweeds, and with small dumplings put inside. From what I see, there aren't enough people who make the dumplings.

"I'll help."
"No, it's alright. I can't let noble-sama dirties his hand."

I offered help to one of the aunty who's cooking, but she refused while being sorry. Using polite speech in strain, what a strange person. Lulu, who's serving the ration, boasts, "Master is good at cooking." to Sera besides her. Do beautiful girls naturally attract each other?

"Aunty, how about some help?"
"Right, it'd be bad if someone got stomachache for eating half-cooked

dumplings."

I quickly greet the people who are cooking, and participate in the cooking.

"Young master, please use this."

A person who looks like a young wife lends me an apron while saying that my clothes mustn't get dirty. I replace her since her work of making surimi seems to be the hardest. Mia who's blowing reed flute while looking bored since awhile ago has stood beside me before I know it, she's staring at my hands working. A nearby aunty who's making dumplings calls out.

"You're pretty good despite being a noble. If you don't succeed your house, how about working in our shop? I'll let my daughter becomes your bride."

One of the aunty praises my skill.
I wonder why do these aunties are offering marriage meeting (omiai) to me.

"No."
""N, no don't." Master is "Eh?""

Mia, and Lulu reacted to the word [Bride] and spoke in denial, but for some reason, even Sera synchronized with Lulu. Lulu isn't the only one who's surprised, even the person herself is. She looks cute with her hands on her mouth while looking surprised, but since the glances from the people who are waiting are scary, I urge her to go back to work.

It can't possibly be love-at-first-sight, so there might be some fragments remaining from when I saved her from the demon lord even if she can't precisely recall it.

Still, even though Sera and Lulu are too young to become the objects of romantic interest, they're feast to my eyes. I want you two to form a unit in five years.

◇

The food distribution is over without any big disturbance.
Just that, there was a person who accused that the dumplings had been exchanged with high-class ones halfway through, but he immediately shriveled after Liza glared at him. We were working right in front of them, so they should have known. It was troubling.

"Hey, it's fine that you're helping, but please hold back."

Arisa scolds me in low voice.
Ridiculous, I only made the surimi by grinding, to even need to hold back....
Even if I disable skill that I've become familiar with, the effect won't significantly differ. For skills like alchemy and compounding that I am really familiar with after countless repetitions, it is possible for me to deliberately make inferior goods, and I can probably do it too with cooking. However, I somehow don't like doing something like making it bad on purpose.

From the chatting with the aunties when we're cooking, they seem to be the housewives from around here and the cleaning ladies of the temple. It seems that the five temples in the downtown are distributing food in turns. The distribution is in every other day, there's not enough fund to do it everyday. The current fund comes from donation from sympathizers in the town, and the temples themselves.

There's a Tenion temple with the head-miko at the noble district, but there's also another temple on the downtown. Or rather, it's just a stone throw away from this square.
The clean-up ends briefly, and then, I help carry the equipments back to the temple together with Pochi and the others.

"Clean-up～""Nano desu."

Pochi and Tama are holding a long table overhead together to carry them, they look cute. Of course, Arisa leads them. She's waving a twig that she's picked up from somewhere while leading the way.

"I'm sorry, you even help with the clean-up."
"It's nothing great, so don't mind about it."

Sera is just talking normally, so why do you kick my butt, Mia.
Lulu carry the pots normally after washing it.

Hmm?
It looks like several people of 『Wings of Liberty』 are coming here while riding horses. They're still a bit far, so we probably would arrive at the temple first.
Pochi and the others carry the desk, the materials and tools to the temple's kitchen. Sera and me are the only two who enter the temple main gate empty-handed. Nana is seeing a hallucination of her carrying two sea lionkin children. Perhaps, she's tired.

"Sera!"
"Ne, nee-san?!"

The one waiting for Sera in the temple is the girl who falls from the sky, the granddaughter of duke Oyugock who's also one of the member of the hero's party, lady Ringrande.

Nevertheless, big sister she said?
Since Sera only has [Miko of Tenion Temple] as her title, I haven't thought that she's a blood relative of duke Oyugock. Their conversations, "Are you healthy?", "You've become big.", sound like normal siblings'. They don't really look alike for siblings, but it's good as long as they get along well.

Now then, I'll interrupt their conversation when the time is right for greeting and leaving. If this girl is here, she could mow down something like 『Wings of Liberty』 with one hand.
However, before I can even talk, the argument has steered toward me.

"You, which house are you from? This girl hates that kind of thing, she's got out of the house and entered the temple you know? Do you think you woo Sera yourself without relying on your house name?"

What's this. For some reason, she's hastily lumping me with a noble who tries to woo Sera. For now, I understand that lady Ringrande loves her little sister and is a cheap person who likes to jump to conclusion.

"N,No it's not like that. Rin nee-san, this person is--."

Sera who follows up by being too upset makes the misunderstanding becomes deeper. Putting aside the big sister, Sera's age is outside the scope of my romantic interest. Even when she's become one, it's highly probable that she won't associate with me, but either way, that has nothing to do with this.

Arisa and the others who have finished tidying up come to pick me up, so I say my farewell to Sera. Before we got out of the temple, a sexy priestess asked for some donations for the sake of the distribution of the food, so I donated several gold coins.

When we get out of the temple, I magnificently ignore the scene where some several nobles-like ruffians riding horses get arrested. Sera is quite an excellent lure.

Various things happened, like lady Karina who had taken her maids along intruded on us when we were looking for spring-related things, or that there weren't any restaurants that sold meat during lunch so Pochi and Liza were down-hearted, but it was generally peaceful shoppings. It was a hard work to make Nana let go of the sea lionkin children when we were leaving the downtown. I asked Arisa to make her the stuffed toy.

During the dinner tonight, lady Karina has caused misunderstanding that I'm her fiancee, so I go through the trouble of dispelling the misunderstanding while keeping lady Karina's face. The previous earl Walgock couple have invited several noble couples from their circle.

I'm looking forward to the workshops visits tomorrow.

8-5. Workshops and Museum Visits

Satou's here. If you're expecting too much on something, the feeling of being betrayed is really great when the real thing doesn't live up to the expectation. I've experienced it with the movie that's made the entire America cry, even if the world changes, let-down is still around after all.

◇

"Blowpipe~?"
"It's swelling nodesu."

Pochi and Tama are flailing around and point at the workers of the workshop while being carried under Liza's arm.
Pochi and Tama are pointing at the blowpipes that the workshop's workers are using to make glass bowls. There are spell-users who use cooling magic in the passage used for the tour so it doesn't feel hot here, but the workers' face are full of sweats.

When Nana sees the swelling of the glass bowls, she looks unsteady like she's being lured from the tour passage, so Lulu and I catch her hands from both sides to stop her.

"Master, I propose the need to do a detailed observation."
"We're observing from here okay."
"Nana-san, you're going to hinder the workers-san. Please endure it."

In contrast with Nana who's overly interested, Arisa yawns uninterestingly. Well, I can understand. When I heard about Oak glass workshop, I was expecting some kind of fantasy workshop, but it turns out to be a very normal workshop.

"If you're interested in it, how about experiencing making one yourself when the tour is over?"
"Yes, if it's alright with you, please."

The one guiding the tour is a depressed-looking old man, this person is the workshop head. He's a bizarrely thin man on the later half of his 50s with receded hair.

Next, we're guided to a place where the raw materials for the glasses are being produced. All the workers are wearing cloths that cover their mouths and noses. It's probably measures against dusts.

"This is where we crush stones, granites and quartzites, that will become glasses. You can change them into glasses by mixing this blue powder you get by crushing this oak stones and then heat them."

Oak stone?
Can it be, a fantasy material?

"These stones are mined from a mine on the side of the northern grapeyard mountain, and the powder from the stones will create bubbles if you put it into water. These bubbles are--"

I understand what it is from the workshop head's story, it seems to be a carbonic acid, or rather a natural soda. I've forgotten the name, but there are ores like that in the previous world. I personally am happy that I get to learn various knowledges, but I wonder if other nobles who visits here wouldn't get annoyed from that kind of technical explanation?

The last room in the tour course is the main event.

"This is the sheet glass magic tool used for producing glass in this workshop."

I'm told that this magic tool seems to be a legacy from Oak empire that precedes Shiga kingdom.

"It looks like a press machine huh."

I also understand what Arisa's said. Red hot glasses are poured on top of a pedestal with 1 meter wide, and 2 meters long, then something that looks like a presser comes down from the top, creating a sheet glass.

I remember seeing a video that shows glasses are poured on top of melted metals to make one before, but I can probably use magic as substitute for the membrane to make the sheet glass.

If I use Cubes, it might be unexpectedly trivial to do it.

Furthermore, we're showed the process to make mirrors from the sheet glass. It seems they use silver nitrate. The completed mirror looks close to the mirror that people use in the previous world. I have some silver nitrates since they're raw materials for alchemy, so I probably can make some mirrors if I have oak stones.

"There are two Pochi~?"
"There's Tama over there nodesu!"

Pochi and Tama on Liza's arms are surprised at the mirror while they point at it. They usually use one, but it's a bronze mirror after all. I've thought those things, but it seems that the points of their surprises are a bit different.

"It's like Soruna's compact mirror nodesu."
"It's big~"

I see, they've seen one from the eldest daughter at Muno castle, Soruna-san. It seems they're simply surprised since their whole bodies are reflected.

Not only Arisa and Mia, even Nana and Liza are looking at the mirror while posing. I should buy one on the way back.

However, only Lulu turns down her face from the mirror. This is unfortunate.
I wonder if there's a way to make Lulu stop hating her own appearance. I'll consult Arisa next time.

They're charging fee for experiencing the glass making process using the blowing instruments, so I pay. We're given one blow pipe as a commemoration. I get [Glasswork] skill when I blow the pipe once, and although I don't know when I'm ever going to use it, I activate it like usual.

When we're going home, I ask the price of a full-length mirror, but I'll have to wait for two years since the reservation is completely full. The glasses seem to be popular for the senior nobles of the royal capital and the duke capital to put it for the windows, their production cannot catch up with the demands.

◇

Continuing after the Oak glass workshop visit, we tour soy sauce, miso, and brewery workshops in rounds.
Apparently, everyone is tired, so I postpone the scheduled visits to the barrier support workshop and silk factory for tomorrow, I ask Shelna-san to take care of the adjustment.

By the way, today's lunch is meat pickled with soup, roasted. A bit burnt, but it's quite delicious. According to Arisa, there's similar cuisine in her previous world, although I don't know one in mine.

"What should we do in the afternoon? How about watching the martial art tournament qualifier?"
"Will master participate too nodesu?"
"I won't."

Pochi and Tama react to Arisa's words, but I immediately deny.

"I think master could become the champion, are you really not going to participate?"
"Peerless hence wonderful~?"
<TLN: Muteki ni suteki~?>
"Nn, champion."

Pochi looks downhearted since I immediately deny, but I think watching the game is more fun than participating in it. More than anything, the demerit for being the champion looks to be greater than the merit.

"Master, there are a museum and an opera house nearby, how about going there?"

"Right, let's go to the museum then."

Lulu talks about a different topic right there, so I get on it. I confirm on the map that there's a museum close by.
There's an elf from the same village as Mia in the opera house, but when I ask Mia about it, she doesn't know the name. It's probably an elf who has got out of the forest before Mia's born.

◇

The visitors of the museum are mainly women who look to be well-off and their servants.

"Yamato~?""Oh, nano desu."
"Fuh~n, it seems they're holding exhibition of the ancestor king Yamato."
"Looks like it's quite crowded there."
"Nn."

The museum is constructed with three connected main halls. Among them, the biggest hall is holding an [Ancestor King Yamato Exhibition] for a limited time.

The order of things are set, so we'll go according to those orders.

First, it's an area for stuffings and skeletal structures.
The ambiance is fundamentally the same as the one in Japan, but there are monster stuffings among them, so the impression is quite different.

"It's dangerous nodesu, please leave this to Pochi and go ahead nodesu!"
"I'll wait it to you~"
"Pochi, we'll wait ahead after defeating the demon lord!"

You girls, please do the tour normally. Why are they holding a small drama.
Moreover, what do you mean by [Wait], it's [Leave].
<TLN: Tama used [Matasete] instead of [Makase]>

"Master, are they not going to move?"

"Un, they're stuffings after all."

I feel they'd move if they become undeads.
Nana points at the stuffings of a small kingfisher and a squirrel-like small animal.

"It's cute."
"Nn."

Lulu and Mia are looking at a penguin's stuffing. There's one in a parallel world too huh. I pray that it's not a stuffing of penguinman or something.

Oh right.

"Pochi, come here for a bit."
"Yes, nano desu."

I carry Pochi, who has come trotting, under my arm and bring it closer to the mouth of a big monster called Fortress Tiger.

"Wagahai, you, bite whole."
<TLN: Wagahai=I.>

While making odd voice to surprise Pochi, I put my arm inside the monster's mouth.

>[Ventriloquism Skill Acquired]

I didn't intend to though.

"Y, you can't nano desu. Pochi isn't tasty nodesu."

Pochi is panicking and flailing around on my arm.

"Meat, delish."
"Meat is tasty, but Po, Pochi isn't a meat nodesu. That's why eating me is, bad, nano desu."

Since Pochi begins to seriously become scared, I put on the break.

"I'm sorry, Pochi."
"Master is mean nodesu. Pochi was scared nodesu. I demand apology and compensation nodesu."
"Then, how about I make a delicious fish dish for dinner as the compensation?"
"Fish.... Fish attacks so I hate it nano desu."

Well now? Did a fish-shaped monster came out?
I glance at Arisa, who smiles wryly beside us, to ask about it.

"Back when we're going around stuffing ourselves with the cuisines in Gururian city, a fish bone gets stuck in Pochi's throat, it was bad."
"A, Arisa. You promised to keep that a secret nodesu. Not talking about it nano desu."

Pochi has tears on her eyes, unusually so, she's hitting Arisa like a spoiled child. Oh, Arisa's HP is decreasing. Arisa is saying, "O, ouch, ch, Po, Pochi, serious punch is not okay~", like she has some allowance, but in truth, it's seriously painful for her isn't it?
I lift Pochi from behind and her punch stops connecting. Since Arisa says, "Uu~ looks like it'll become bruises.", I give her mana healing with the hand that hold Pochi in reverse.
<TLN: I think I'll go with magic power = mana from now on.>

"Oh~, it feels nice."
"Master, please the mana supplement for me."
"Next."

Since Nana wouldn't understand that this isn't mana supplying, I give the mana healing to everyone who seems to be interested with it.
For some reason, it's become so that I'm healing waist pain of the elderly in the museum too, and since Pochi and the others have been given snacks by the elderly, I can't stop halfway, and finish until the last one. Liza and Lulu accompanied beside me until the end, but the other members go back to tour the museum, maybe because they grew tired. That's unfair.

8-6. Workshops and Museum Visits (2)

Satou's here. I couldn't believe it when I saw the existence of tofu hamburg steak for the first time. Recently, there are a lot of hamburg steaks made with various raw materials, but I say that hamburg steak made with minced beef and pork is the best.

◇

It's already evening huh.
Just how many old men's and old women's waists have I massaged.
Everyone was grateful so it was worth doing, but I had hoped that they would hold back a bit.

"Looks like the field hospital is over eh. Here, here, come here."

Arisa and Nana have just come back from sightseeing work of arts and treasures. The two lead me by hands to the Yamato exhibition. There are only a few people around, maybe because it's evening.

"Gozaru~"
"Gozaru nano desu!"

Pochi and Tama who are wearing haori that look like Shinsengumi outfits are taking poses with wooden swords modeled after Japanese katana on their hands.

"Fu fuhn, they look the part right. I've bought them from the cosplay corner, or rather, souvenir corner."
"Arisa, I cannot commend on your wasteful spending."

Liza scolds her, but Arisa's pocket money comes from the salary she's got from Nina-san. I can't get used with, "What belongs to the slaves also belongs to the master.", kind of common sense at all.

There are also a corner exhibiting Japanese katana, but they're treated as [Ancient Swords]. It seem like it didn't get spread.

The dummy of Yamato-san's side arm, the holy sword Claiomh Solais, is being displayed at the center of the katana exhibition corner.
It's a big sword nearly two meters long. From what I remember, Claiomh Solais should have been a one-handed sword in the previous world, but since it's a knowledge from games, it's not a reliable one.
If Yamato-san can use this sword, that person might unexpectedly have large body build.

A huge three meters wide picture is being displayed behind the dummy sword.
It's a picture of Yamato-san fighting against a demon lord with golden body standing on top of a castle. Yamato-san is depicted riding on a dragon's back while wielding the holy sword. Yamato-san looks slightly small, but since the dragon and the demon lord are big, I guess it can't be helped.
Numerous floating swords are pictured there, it's probably the artist's interpretation. It's a scene that seems likely to appear in an anime.

"There is no such thing as human riding on a dragon."
"Eeh~, don't something like dragon knight fire you up."

Liza looks a bit displeased when she sees the picture of Yamato-san riding a dragon. The scalekin might be people who deify dragons.
I somehow understand why Arisa used [Fired up], instead of [Burned]. Mia is nodding besides Arisa, I'm not going to pursue the reason for that.

Arisa, be more modest in being a culture hazard.

Before we could get to the clothes exhibition, a museum official notifies us that the building is closing, so the tour ends. Let's come again if we have time.
According to Arisa who has toured it earlier, there are various cosplay costumes inside, but I think that they're not cosplay but what the people in that era are wearing.

◇

When we get back to the earl's mansion, lady Karina who's got left behind tries to pick a quarrel with me, but she quickly forgives me after Pochi and Tama present her with the matching shinsegumi's haori, and the headband as souvenirs. She's quite calculating.

Lady Karina's maids group raise cheer of joy when I tell them that I'm in charge of the cooking tonight, but since I don't think I could make anything extravagance, it's troubling when they're this happy.

For the sake of fixing Pochi's hate with fish, I'm making a fish dish today.

"How about it, Arisa helped dressed me, do you think it suits me?"
"It suits you really well."

I answer half-heartedly to lady Karina who purposely comes to the kitchen to show me the haori she's wearing. Is she really that happy for the matching outfit with Pochi and the others?

I make the fish into minced meat.
It hits upon me when I see the dumplings for the ration yesterday; the fish meat hamburg steak. I slightly mix in goat fat to add some subtle flavors, since the taste would be too plain with just fish meat. I'm unsure with the amount of eggs I have in stock for this. Since Karina maids group looks to be free, let's ask them to buy some eggs.

"Master, the oil is boiling."

I ask Lulu to fry the potatoes. Potato is a must for hamburg steak.
Next, I quickly make the carrot glace. The potatoes are piling up, I'll make mashed potatoes from it. I put the asparagus look-a-like as the garnish.

The Worcester-like sauce that I've got from the head chef in Gururian city is going to be the sauce. I can make it myself since I've been taught the recipe too, but it's not usable for now since it needs fermentation. Therefore, I decide to use the ones from the parting gift just like that.

"Pochi!""Tama!"

The two people call each other's name and hug when they see the hamburg steak. Are you really that happy?　That remind me, they're also overjoyed when I make it with ordinary meat back then. There's no sauce at that time, so I make a faux sauce with the soy sauce as the base.

I tell everyone beforehand that there is no additional serving for the hamburg steak, so they eat it while savoring the taste.

"Delishya～"
"Though it's different from before, it's delicious nodesu."
"Delicious～♪"

Looks like it's quite popular.

"It's the first time I've eaten this dish."
"I'm eating such luxurious dish that even Karina-sama hasn't eaten!"
"Erina, stop being vulgar during the meal."

The mouths that need to feed have increased with lady Karina's and her maid group'. I'm the one who invited them at first, but the maid group are eating together before I know it.

"Pochi, is it delicious?"
"Yes, nano desu!"
"Really?"
"Real, ly, nano desu!"

Pochi bends her body with the "Real", and stretch out her whole being with the "Ly" to express the deliciousness. It's cute, but I have to tell her the truth here.

"Pochi-kun."
"Yes, captain."

Captain is it.

"I have a serious thing to report."
"Aye."

Why are you saluting.

"That hamburg steak is made with fish."
"Fissh meat nano desu?"

Pochi leans her head to one side. Why are you using strange intonation.

"Like I said, it's not meat, it's fish."
"L, lie nano desu! Master is a bully nano desu."
"Pochi-chan, it's not a lie. I was beside master so I saw it too. It was certainly made with minced fish."
"Gaa~n, nano desu."

Pochi falls to the ground while supported by both her hands. Why are you shocked to that extent.
Tama pats the shoulder of Pochi who's fallen down.

"Pochi."
"Tamaa."

Tama strongly puts her thumbs up and continues her words.

"Delicious is~ Justice!"
"!"

Pochi is astonished with Tama's words.
It somehow stinks of a small theatric play, so I glance at Arisa who averts her eyes. So you really are the one behind this.

"Tama speaks the truth nodesu. Delicious thing is supreme nano desu!"

Pochi raises her face, and gazes at the sky with an expression as if enlightened. Since we're indoor, the only thing that could be seen there is the chandelier, but no one is retorting.
For the time being, Pochi has become better with fish. When we're eating fish dish, she asks me or Lulu to take out the bones, but she doesn't dislike it anymore.

◇

"Arisa, do you want to read this book?"
"Nn~? The book you've bought with Toruma ossan? Is there a book for intermediate level light magic?"

Arisa invited me to the bathroom when we were relaxing on the sofa after meal, so I changed the subject to avert her attention. The bathroom here is for single-person use only with a bath tub, so I can't relax if I get intruded during the bath.

"T, these are!"

I show Arisa the magic book for intermediate level light magic, explosion magic, and destruction magic manual.

"Kuh, if I dye my hair to pink, I'd exactly become the heroine."

Yeah yeah.
Next, I take out the space magic book that only has the spells written in it.

"What's this one? The book looks to be very badly managed..."

Arisa's expression changes after she sees the spell.

"Hey, don't tell me this is space magic?"
"It is."
"Don't, say, it, so easily~~~."

I slightly pull away from Arisa who's loaded her words with excessive force while saying, "Uga".

"It surely is unusual, but people who can use space magic aren't that rare right?"

From what I see in all the cities I've been so far, shadow magic is the rarest. I've never seen any user beside Zen.

The runner-ups are explosion, destruction, and mind magic, beside lady Ringrande and Arisa, the only other users of those magic are demons and the demon lord.
Following it are ghost, summoning, and space magic, their users are few, but in a big city, there are several people who can use them.

"What are you saying! It's space magic you know, space magic! It's not a standard cheat!"
"It'd be convenient if there's a teleport magic, but you don't have enough skill points to learn space magic right?"

Arisa's degree of excitement has decreased somewhat.
I'm sorry to spoil the fun, but even if there is a teleport magic, it'd be an advanced level.

"Fuhahaha, since when did you misunderstand that skill points are fixed?"

Arisa looks down from the sofa while looking proud.

That's a surprise.

8-7. Nighttime Training

Satou's here. Recently, on top of being online, save data is saved automatically, making the reset trick like how it's used to be in the past becomes unusable, it feels slightly lonely. There's just something good about reset isn't it.

◇

"What do you mean? Don't tell me, it can be reset?"
"It can you know? Didn't I tell you?"

This is the first time I've heard it of course.
I still have grandly excessive skill points remaining, but since the prospect of leveling up isn't too bright for me, the existence of reset is quite important.

"How do we do it?"
"You acquire the reset skill, 『Reset』, and execute it. You can get back all points from all skills except unique and gift ones."

How convenient.
And how unreasonable. It's an unrelated skill for me who cannot choose reset.

"Hey, don't show such face."

She can see through the poker face skill like always.

"Even reset isn't all-powerful."

If it was, you could change skills composition during a fight. That reminds me, that anime [Esper Senotan] I've watched does similar things.

"You lost 5-20% of your skill point once you use it you know. And there is no way to recover them."

I'll lost 155-620 skill points if I use it huh, the remuneration is too great. I understand why Arisa has never used it now.

"There's also another reason why I don't want to use it~."

When I ask it, she answers, "REALLY, painful."
Then, wouldn't the neighborhood get annoyed if she used reset here. I was going to prepare pain-killer for her, but according to Saga hero, there were records of increased lost points when the person involved used medicines.

"Do you have any place in mind where it's okay to make noises?"
"Wait a bit."

I execute the wind magic that I've learned, <<Secret Field>>.
With this, sounds will not leak out for several hours.

"I've used the magic to make this place private. Sounds won't leak with this."
"Then we can do ecchi things as we please right."
"I'd cancel it you know?"

This Arisa really never changes huh.

◇

I put Arisa who is exhausted to rest on my lap.

After she executed reset, I hugged Arisa on my lap, but not only she clawed my back, she was also going wild on my arms. I was worried that her violet hair would turn white, but it was just an imaginary fear. When the reset is over, she lost her consciousness, so I let her slept on my lap on the sofa, but...

"Arisa, if you're going to sexually harass me, I'll put you down from my lap

okay?"

Even after that much pain, what a tough girl. She put herself in a delicate position while pretending to be asleep.

"So, did it go well?"
"Sort of~, I don't quite have enough points, so in exchange of mind and light magic, I've got space magic level 6."

Arisa is feeling accomplished, but I have to warn her beforehand.

"Arisa, this is an order. Barging into the bathroom while I'm bathing or peeking at me changing are forbidden beside during emergency."
"Guha, at least, at least, do that order if I get caught red-handed please. The little bit of reward for a maiden~~~."

She's really thinking about it after all huh.

◇

Arisa requests to have her test her magic to her heart's content, so we go to the underground labyrinth. I inform Liza when we are going out.
The duke's subordinates are on the lookout at the teleport device and the hole that I've made before, so I make a new passage in another place to the underground labyrinth.

"The king has donkey ears."

I understand what she's trying to say, but what would we do if there are soldiers patrolling the area. There's none though of course.

"Stop saying stupid things, let's go."

I carry Arisa on my arms, and jump below. It's not connected to the floor where I fight the demon lord, but another place.

"Haa, I thought I was going to die."

How rude. I regulated the speed properly.
Since I'm afraid that the effect from big magic would be felt above ground, I dive three layers below.

"What kind of place is this? It looks like a labyrinth, but there's no monster."
"It's the remain of a labyrinth."
"Ee~ it feels like the demon lord will really come out."

Hmm?
What is she saying?

"Didn't I say yesterday? When I was hunting demons, I also defeated a demon lord that popped up."

Even though Arisa was saying, "Good work~", or, "It was hard huh~" herself.

"Eh, you were serious?"
"Very serious."
"Lying~ you're lying, if it's true, your title should have become 『True Hero』!"

She's knowledgeable about it.
Might as well, I put on the hero Nanashi style and the title [True Hero]. I do not don the wig, so my hair remains black. I have to buy one next time.

"Uwah, it's true. How did you defeat it? Ah, it must be with a holy sword of course."

Galatine delivers the decisive blow, but the one that does the most works is Durandal, so I show that one to her.
Arisa is returning the sword, but I tell her to keep it.

"The demon lord has been defeated, so I'll leave it to Arisa. I have a lot of other weapons, so it's fine."

I'm thinking of leaving one to Arisa for an insurance if anything happens, but Arisa interprets it differently, and desperately draws closer to me.

"Don't tell me that the repatriation offer from the god has come."

The heck is that.

"After you defeat the demon lord and become the 『True Hero』, it seems that the god will come to ask if you want to be repatriated, or remain in this world as a hero. The story is that if you answer 『Go home』 then, you'd get sent back to your previous world."
"There's no need to worry about it, even if the god asks me if I want to go back, I'll stay here for the present time."

I can't go back to the previous world in peace before Arisa, Pochi, and the others become strong enough to defeat demons.
Furthermore, I'm not summoned with the normal hero summoning, so there's no guarantee that I can go back to the previous world. If I get the chance to do it, I'll ask to have a letter for my family delivered instead of myself. If I just write [I'm healthy], I feel like they will forgive me. My family are carefree unlike me, so it's probably alright.

"Th, that means..."

Oops, Arisa who's misunderstood is blushing, let's talk about something stupid.

"I haven't finished the sightseeing of this world after all."
"He?"

The angry Arisa is hitting me softly, let's take it contently.

◇

"Did you get any rare drop? Like demon lord core (Demon Core)?"

Although it seems to be something real, looks like the thing called [Demon Lord Core (Demon Core)] doesn't exist.

"There's nothing great. There are two liuyedao that the demon lord uses, but they're too big for human, it's unusable. Moreover, one of them is broken. Other things are belongings of [Wings of Liberty], like demon summoning magic book, or specific magic circle for summoning the short horn, and also, miscellaneous accessories."

Those accessories belong to nobles, so they could be worth some money, but since it'd likely be doubted from robbery, I melt them to become materials instead.
I have a lot of Short Horn, the original collection goal, but there's no need to say it.

"Demon summoning, it doesn't use mobile phone or note PC does it."
"It doesn't."

It's just that, since it's a dangerous book with methods to summon upper demon or the ceremony for demon lord revival, I intend to store it away. I can just burn it, but since there's a possibility that the content of the spell can be applied for other magic, I'm going to keep it.

I test elementary level magic together with Arisa, but it's dangerous to try intermediate and higher level magic with Arisa, so I go alone to a gigantic floor to test them. As expected of real magic intended for attacking, not blacksmithing. You can't joke around with the power.
I can only use [Implosion] of explosion magic, and powered-down [Laser] of light magic when I'm in a town.
I will have Toruma's parent house to create scrolls that are a bit more usable.

"Welcome back."

Arisa who's welcoming me is looking listless on the cushion she's put on the floor.
She's probably totally exhausted. I can smell sweet scent, so she's probably drunk mana recovery potion while testing her magic.

"What kind of extreme magic did you use. I was scared that the labyrinth would collapse you know."

That's strange.
On top of being quite far from her, I covered the inner wall with the barrier magic that I had learned.

"I'm sorry, it looks like I wasn't serene enough."
"It's fine already. I can't get surprised anymore."

In other words, you were surprised huh.

"Rather than that, could you make something like this?"

Arisa is asking me to make a carved seal, that's drawn the magic book, on a board. Looks like it's a unique mark needed to be put at the teleport destination for the only teleport magic in the space magic book that has until intermediate level in it.

"Seems like you'd be able to do trading alone with this."
"Please don't be absurd. It only reaches several kilometers at most. Even leveling up the skill only help to increase number of people that can be teleported together, and decrease MP consumption on this magic."

Presently, Arisa can only take one person along with her. Moreover, she'll run out of magic power by just leaping a bit of distance. The fuel consumption looks bad.

"During a real emergency, I can use [Over Boost], and take everyone along to escape."

Oh, that's the best.
I give Arisa several carved seal boards that I've finished making on the magic granting stand. These take one gold coin and two silver coins to make, it looks like a space magician can easily run out of money.

Since we're here already, I hide one carved seal board on this place.

8-8. At Toruma's Residence

Satou's here. Japanese houses can be described as rabbit's huts, but I think 1LDK is enough for living alone. The cleaning and tidying would be troublesome if it's too wide.

◇

"What are you making this time?"
"It's a wire."

The workshop visits are scheduled for the afternoon today, so I spend the free time to do some handiworks. Even though I say wire, it's not a simple steel thread. If I entwine magic liquid to a yarn, it becomes able to move it at my discretion. It can't move quite freely at will, so it might be good to think carefully on the knit direction.

Tama who sits on my lap has been entangling with the wire, so the work doesn't really progress. I've asked Mia to help me to hold the yarn, but it seems she's having more fun with the wire.

Mia, even if you're tired, please don't play with the wire together with Tama.

"Fuffuffuu, I know what you're actually making!"

Hoo?

"It must be, a whip sword!"

The heck is that?
Is there even any relation with wire.

"I'm just making a normal wire though?"
"Eh, boring."

The whip sword Arisa is talking about seems to come out in a certain anime, it's a fantasy weapon where the sword can detach like a whip connected with wire and back to sword shape. It's probably like a three-secion staff.

I don't think that it's practical at all.
When I tell that to Arisa, she says, "It's romantic." It can't be helped if it's a romance then.

Although, if I have the nature magic [Magic Hand] and [Mana String], I probably won't need the wire that can moves at will, but it might be better not to tell her that.

◇

The workshop visits in the afternoon finishes faster than scheduled, so I decide to come to Toruma's residence as I've promised the other day.
I'm followed by Nana, Arisa, and for some reason, also lady Karina and her maid Pina. Pochi and Tama naturally don't look like they want to go, and since the others also seem like they don't want to meet Toruma, I leave them behind. You've done a great job getting hated Toruma ossan.

Liza asked me to have her also followed, but I requested her to teach Lulu and the others self-defense and left them. If I thoughtlessly let her come, there's a high probably that she'll get offended there.

I've imagined that Toruma's residence will be a 3LDK since I'm told that it's a detached building of the viscount Shimen's mansion, but instead, the residence is easily bigger than the mansion we're staying. We enter from the back door near Toruma's residence so I don't get to see the main building, but it must be an imposing building.

Viscount Shimen is flourishing alright. No wait, the building is probably the fruit of many generations' powers.

"Excuse me for my long absence, Hayuna-san."
"It has been a while, Satou-san. Ara, I have to stop calling you Satou-san.

Since you've got a peerage, I wonder if I have to call you with your house name."

Hayuna-san who I haven't seen for a while is wearing a relaxed noble wife-like clothes. They're not gaudy, but it looks graceful and of high-quality. Mayuna-chan is being cuddled by a middle-aged maid who looks to be the wet-nurse.

"I have come back, young organism."

Nana pokes Mayuna-chan with her finger, and the little hand catches that finger. Nana's face looks like it's melting when she sees that gesture.

Meanwhile, lady Karina looks at that situation very interestingly, but she doesn't try to approach the baby at all.

"Do you want to try holding her in your arm, Karina-sama?"

Hayuna-san has offered so to lady Karina, but she only replies by shaking her head. Come to think of it, she's docile in front of Toruma. Unexpectedly, he might have been her first love.

◇

"Have Karina-sama gone to the opera house?"
"No, there wasn't a good opportunity..."
"You should go by all means. You have to hear the miraculous voice of Lulilutoa the fairy at least once!"
"Hee, by fairy, you mean elf?"
"It's difficult to distinguish between fairy, but it's probably an elf."

We're having a chat while enjoying tea and snacks on the terrace. Hayuna-san is talking about various topics with Karina who's being quiet and meek, but she doesn't respond it well. Arisa follows-up Hayuna-san to help her. Nana is going crazy about the baby of course.

"Oh right, Satou-dono."

"What is it?"

Toruma is going to say something at this time, but it will forever remain a mystery.
That is because the mood has been dyed by the appearance of a woman who pushes through the bushes.

"Ara, Toruma-niisan, I've thought you are eloping, you've come back?"
"Hey, Rin, it's been a while. You've become quite beautiful."

The one that appears is lady Ringrande. She's calling Toruma brother due to the habit since her childhood, but he's actually her cousin. Looks like she doesn't have her armor and great sword today. She's wearing red knight-like clothes with a thin sword hanging. However, judging from how she appears, is she being chased by someone?

"Toruma-niisan, I'm sorry, but can you let me hide here for a bit?"
"No problem. I've never declined a request from Rin right?"
"Thank you, nii-san is always reliable--"

Lady Ringrande scans on the people around while thanking Toruma closely, and immediately after she sees me on the corner of her eyes, she approaches.

"You, after failing to hit on Sera, now you're trying to approach her from the moat outside?"

That's quite outrageous even for a false accusation. The misunderstanding should have been cleared by Sera's explanation in the first place.
Arisa glances for an instant, but I gesture to her not to cut into the conversation.

"Sera-sama most likely had explained it already, but I just met her by chance when I was helping the food distribution on the downtown."

I try to tell her that it's just an unfounded misunderstanding, but the KY ossan talks about unneeded things as expected.

"So Satou-dono is aiming for Sera huh, I've thought that you surely will

marry Karina since you've brought her here from Muno territory. It's still not enough with eight huh, I'm really jealous of young people."
"Toruma-niisan, are you speaking the truth?"
"Un? It's mostly true yeah."

Ossan, please restrain yourself from speaking statements that will birth misunderstandings. Eight you say, stop including lady Karina in the equation.

"You're going to make the cute Sera your ninth lover? I won't forgive you."
"Err~ Ringrande-sama? I'll say this many times over, it's a misunderstanding okay?"

She pulls the thin sword and comes toward me.

"Excuses are useless. I'll beat you into shape once to correct your character. Or, is that sword on your waist just a decoration?"

It is a decoration though.
She looks like she'll get mad if I say that. She's already mad even if I don't say it though.
Arisa is grinning while laughing and saying, "Go get her~?", irresponsibly fanning her. Hayuna-san looks troubled even though she doesn't really understand the situation. Nana shows her face and says, "Master, may the fortune be with you.", and goes back to the baby--must be because she trusts me.

At time like this, Karina who's usually the fastest to pick a quarrel is quiet. I've thought that she's still being meek, but she looks grim for some reason. She's muttering, "Ringrande? Cousin Rin? That's the genius magician who's become the hero's companion?" in a low voice. I prefer her usual, "It's a fight desuwa.", than her being like this.

Looks like there's some kind of discord between them, so I won't involve myself with it.

"I understand, I may be inadequate, but please instruct me well."

Can't be helped.

Might as well get her teach me how to fight. I've also been ridiculed by the demon lord, so this is just right.
While walking to the courtyard where she's standing by, I draw the fairy sword, taking the breaths of lady Ringrande, Hayuna-san and the others. I wonder who's the one that murmurs, "Beautiful."

I don't put magic power into the fairy sword, and wield it in its lightweight state.

Lady Ringrande stabs with her thin sword without any preparation. The course is to my cheek. The stabs is quick as one expects of the thin sword.

I prepare the fairy sword in low stance to brush the attack off.

Before the thin sword touch the fairy sword, she retracts and holds it, and when I'm swinging the fairy sword up, she pushes the thin sword to my defenseless chest.

Wait, lady Ringrande? That's going straight to my heart you know?
I'm thinking that she's going to stop before hitting, but she looks like she's thinking that insects that follow lady Sera around should just die, scary.

I'm pulling the short cane with my other hand which doesn't hold the fairy sword to ward off the thin sword. Of course, the short cane will be easily cut if it blocks the thin sword, but as if seeing it as a dagger since I move it in an instant, Ringrande pulls back her thin sword, and opens up some distances.

"Fumu, you're quite good. It doesn't seem like your mithril sword is only for show. You were pretending to be an amateur by having your eyes looked all over the place right. I didn't think that you had prepared your next move beforehand."

I see, my lines of sight huh. I didn't think that.
Afterwards, I learn the way to use my line of sight to feint, reading the breath, and many other techniques that aren't covered in skills.

Misunderstandings are good sometimes.

8-9. At Toruma's Residence (2)

Satou's here. Mad dogs kind of people often appear in tales, but in the previous world, I've only ever seen those kinds during my school days. Are they mellowing with ages? In a parallel world, I feel that they'd get weeded out before they could get mellowed.

◇

"Hoo, the one they call Silver Valkyrie of the Battlefield is playing together with a kid huh?"

The people who are intruding this precious lady Ringrande's swordsmanship classroom are three knights wearing white armors. They're subordinates of Shiga kingdom king, the holy knights, and also; the elderly man, and the humorous yet handsome young man have [Shiga Eight Sword] titles. The humorous handsome young man is called Sharlick Shiga. The third prince of Shiga kingdom.

By the way, by kid, did he mean me?

"Prince Sharlick, isn't it impolite to intrude on other people's house even if he's your retainer?"
"Ringrande, you're too stiff. Heya, little brother of viscount Shimen--."
"Toruma. Your highness."

Toruma supplemented the prince who was hesitating.
Ossan can read this kind of atmosphere huh. In a way, he's really like a noble.
Without looking excited, the prince says, "Sorry to intrude.", and Toruma also allow him like it's natural.

Nevertheless, I know that he has a business with lady Ringrande, but what are these guys coming here for?

"I have some businesses with Ringrande. You guys, step away."

He said it like a request, but that was an order alright.

"Your highness, I'm sorry, but this is my house, and she is my cousin. Even if it's your highness, it'll be better if you avoid being alone together with an unmarried woman."
"Fuhn, what's wrong with fiancees being alone together."
"Our engagement should have been canceled since seven years ago."

Well then, I want to get away from this complicated spot, I wonder what I should do.

"Your highness, you should stop with the troublesome talks, and just do it like this."

The holy knight boy who have been looking like a mischievous kid since earlier draws his sword and comes to me while slashing it.
What's with this guy? Is his head alright?

His rushing speed is fast, but compared to lady Ringrande, his swordsmanship is full of holes.

"Oh you're drawing your sword in front of his highness, it's fine to label you as a rebel then right."

What kind of logic is that. Hair-splitting-ly bad false accusation.
Since he uses a mithril alloy sword known for its hardness, I avoid his attack without blocking with the fairy sword. However, the boy continues attacking relentlessly.

Is he a battle maniac?

"Oyo? That mithril sword isn't only for show eh. Aha, can you block this?"

The boy releases an consecutive attacks technique like tornado.
Is this a fighting game.

I will look too conspicuous if I avoid that, so I receive it with my sword and

pretend to be blown back. Lady Karina and Hayuna-san call out my name with worry. Arisa probably understands since my health hasn't decreased, and Nana doesn't seem to worry from the beginning. They really trust me~. They really trust me, right?

Lady Karina literally jumps with Raka's power and holds me on her arms. OH! fuka, fuka.
<TLN: onomatopoeia for 'soft soft'.>

"Hee, you can use physical reinforcement too eh? If you pick up his sword, I'd be your opponent you know?"

I stop lady Karina's hand that's going to pick my sword. She cannot win.

"You can't, Karin-sama(.)"

Meanwhile, Toruma is doing his best trying to stop the prince. He's quite weak-willed, but work hard.

"Your highness, he's a retainer of baron Muno, and a noble who holds peerage. Can you please stop the man over there?"
"Hou, serving that cursed territory, he must've been quite broke."

Huh? I get slightly angry from the line just now. I might be quite fond of baron Muno and his retainers if I say so myself. Arisa looks quite offended, but as expected, the opponent is too bad, she can't intervene.

"I won't forgive you for insulting our territory, even if you're the prince. I'll make you take back that word, even if I have to risk my life."
"Fuhn, are you trying to gain favor of that kid and join the rank of noble? Women should just stay in the home raise the children you've birthed obediently."

Lady Karina has told me that she has never participated in the upper society even once, so that's probably why he doesn't know her. It seems he's thinking that she's the wife or a mistress of the retainer of baron Muno, in other word, a worthless noble, not his daughter. It's pitiful.

"I am the second daughter of baron Muno, Karina desuwa. There's no

reason to treat me like a maidservant you know?"

Lady Karina stands up in front of the prince while she puts her hands on her waist, firmly facing to the front and glares at him.
I stand up while patting my head who has fallen to the ground.

The opponent is a prince, the right thing to do here is to withdraw.

"I cannot remain silent since my master's house is insulted. Even if you're a prince, I'll have you retract your words earlier."

Huh～?
Even though the right thing to do was to wait carefully. I lined up side-by-side with lady Karina, and said such words. It must have been the influence of this teenage body. I'll leave it at that.
At minimum, I'm discreet enough to leave the sword in the sheath. I'm certain to become the target of punishment if I face my sword toward the royal family.

"Karina-dono, our winning percentage is limitlessly zero understand?"
"Raka-san, there are times when a woman must not withdraw."

The two are heating up?　However, you shouldn't confront him physically since he's a royal family okay.

"As ever, you think women are only tools for giving birth to children."

Lady Ringrande says so in a voice shaking with anger while cutting herself between lady Karina and the prince.
Toruma comes and claps Karina's shoulder. Her feet are trembling. She was really forcing herself.

"Your highness, the person you've falsely accused is the hero of the Muno city defensive war. Moreover, he's defeated the demon that's appeared in Gururian city, and currently stays in this dukedom capital as the duke Oyugock's guest of honor. Putting aside your highness, I think it would trouble the people over there."

Shifting the blame from the prince to the battle maniac boy huh.

The prince wouldn't back down if he was criticized after all.

"Fuhn, it can't be helped, I suppose I'll leave it here. It'd be troubling if the available forces decreased before the demon lord awakens.
Right, was it Toruma? The only capital is the royal capital. Calling Oyugock city a capital is a blasphemy somewhat."

The prince leaves while firing such parting shot.

I didn't think that Toruma would be the one who restored peace to this place.
Nevertheless, I'm worried with the way that prince is speaking as if the demon lord will be revived here for certain. Don't tell me, the mastermind behind the [Wings of Liberty] isn't the third prince, is he?

◇

"Is that prince going to participate in the martial arts tournament too?"
"No, that's not it--you're doing well after getting that attack."
"I had a magic potion in my pocket just at the right time."

I wave the empty bottle to deceive her.
Toruma answers my question.

"I think his highness is going to attend the wedding ceremony of Rin's little brother, Tisrad, that is to be held after the tournament ends."

Tisrad is a grandchild of duke Oyugock, he's going to marry the daughter of marquis Elett it seems. The next duke is going to be the father of lady Ringrande, and the next one after that seems to be Tisrad's turn. It seem she has also gone home in order to attend this wedding.

"There's also a rumor that his majesty will also attend this ceremony."
"Toruma-niisan, that's a confidential matter. Please don't spread it around too much."

The maid recommends me to change my tattered clothes to new ones, so I

leave from here.

Still, the development is progressing by leaps and bounds.

The settled matters are, [The third prince, Shalrick, wants to make lady Ringrande his bride.], [Lady Ringrande does not want that.], [The little brother of lady Ringrande is going to get married], I guess.
The unsettled matters are, [The king might come for the wedding ceremony.], [The third prince and his companions might be certain that the demon lord would appear in the dukedom capital.]

It's scary if a different demon lord appears during the wedding ceremony.

When I'm going to leave Toruma's residence after changing clothes, lady Ringrande calls out to me.

"You're better than I've thought. Come to the castle if you want to become stronger. I'll give you some lessons while I'm in the dukedom capital."

I'd be glad to receive her lessons, but I hate to do it in a conspicuous place like the castle.

"I'll say this just in case, it's not like I've recognized your relationship with Sera alright?"

Like I said, it's a misunderstanding.
When I've exhausted myself telling her that it's a "Misunderstanding", she gets angry instead, "What are you dissatisfied with Sera with". What an incoherent person.

Arisa secretly says, "A tsundere has come", is this tsundere?

◇

"I won't forgive him."
"That's right. It's good that he's the third prince."

"You're right~ That's the silver lining."

It seems that lady Karina who's being indignant cannot comprehend Arisa's and my words.

"See, if that became the king of this era, it'd be hard to live in this kingdom."
"When that happen, I have no choice but to move to Saga empire."

To help improve lady Karina's mood a bit, Arisa and me are joking around for a bit.

"Y, you can't desuwa. Satou is father's retainer, so you mustn't leave."

Lady Karina presses on me as if shaken, speaking worryingly. Close. Lady Karina, you're close. If you're this close, various things will hit--

Nana's breast are great, but lady Karina's volumes are extraordinary. I'm dangerously almost get adrift.

"Kick."

We've been havng a conversation on the courtyard of earl Walgock's mansion, but Mia appears out of nowhere and kicks me. She forcibly puts herself between lady Karina and me, opening some distances.

I tell lady Karina, "The thing about Saga empire is just a joke.", while patting Mia's head. I think she says something like, "Is, is that so, then it's fine desuwa", while blushing for a bit.

◇

In the evening of this day, I get entangled with the grumblings of lady Karina and her maids about the matter with the prince. Someone from the maid trope has brought liquor so I keep Arisa and the others away. I don't want to repeat that tragedy again.

Liza has been dispatched as the watchdog, she's participating in the

drinking bout together with me. Liza certainly doesn't get hangover, but she goes to sleep instead. She's sleeping in a beautiful posture while sitting even now.

The two younger maids are smashed, they're sleeping on my laps. Lady Karina's gazes look scary.

"Satou! You should be gentler with me desuwa."
"That's right, chevalier-sama should make a rice porridge for me."

This is why drunkards are.
Lady Karina and Pina are only saying what they want to say each. They probably won't remember what they've said themselves tomorrow.

Raka wisely keeps silent.
I was going to follow its exemplar, but the two were hanging on each of my sides while saying, "Hey, are you listening?", and, "Does chevalier-sama prefer flat chest or kyonyuu, which is it!" One side feels too good, I'm not able to push them away.

Let's decline any invitation for drinking bout from tomorrow on.
Since the drunk Lady Karina is erotic, it's a bit hard to get entangled like this.

Let's make the rice porridge as the main gentle menu for the breakfast tomorrow.

8-10. To the Duke's Castle

Satou's here. During my school days, there was this wonderful catchphrase from the often-airing merchant's CM, "Crossing thousands of miles for meals." Much less thousands of miles, I've crossed over worlds instead.

◇

Why is this happening.

"Chevalier-sama, we've finished peeling the prawns' shells."
"Ah, not like that, you have to cover this with the flour once."
"Are we really going to use these leaves?"
"Yes, please wash the perilla with water."

Lulu and me are frantically making tempura with the duke's chefs in the duke's castle kitchen.

It was several hours before that--

◇

"Chevalier-sama, a messenger has come from the duke's castle."

Shelna-san told me while looking like she was seeing something heartwarming.
Right now I'm being toyed like a dress-up doll by Arisa under the pretext of the fitting session for the ball.

"Did you make any promise?"
"No, the plan today is only for me to attend the ball in the castle from the evening."

I tear off Arisa who has been using the opportunity to touch me all over while taking measurements, and change to the robe that Lulu has handed to me. I see that my hair isn't disordered from the mirror that Liza is holding, so I go to the messenger just as it is.

The one waiting in the room is the duke castle's consul aide--or not, it's the assistant who is taking notes in the back back then. He's saying that the duke wants to meet me in secret.

In secret.

In other words, it must be about the matter with the prince yesterday.
It shouldn't possibly be because of lady Sera. Even if lady Ringrande makes a fuss over the misunderstanding, lady Sera is still a miko of Tenion temple. Her name is also not Sera Oyugock, but [Sera], she's probably the so-called nun. Even if I make advances at her, we won't be able to get married. Before that, I don't even have any intention of making one.

Just in case, I ask about the subject to the messenger-san, but he doesn't know the detail after all.
For now, I'll have Arisa follows me to the castle.

"Arisa."
"What? This looks good on me right? You can praise me to your heart contents now~."

She's wearing the exact same maid uniform as the maids in Muno castle. Her blond wig isn't only styled in twin tail, but they're also loosely rolled. So this is the reason why she's coaxed me in making the hair iron-like magic tool the other day.

"Yeah, it's cute, it's cute. However, we're going to the castle, so take them off."

I tell Arisa to take off the slaver collar that she's put herself. She hasn't been using it recently, so what happens?

"If I wear it with maid uniform, won't you suddenly get a rush of immoral

urge and become tempted to push me down?"
"I won't."

She says "Chiee" due to my immediate answer, and removes the collar.
I'm glad that the messenger is in the other carriage.

◇

"Leon's written in the letter that sir Pendragon isn't only well-versed in swordsmanship, and magic, but also in cooking."

Who's this Leon again.
Oh right, it's baron Muno's name if I'm not mistaken. I wonder what did he write in the letter.
We're in the same room as the one I've met with the duke in, a few days ago. Today, there aren't only the secret bodyguards around, lady Ringrande is also here.

"Fuhn, your swordsmanship yesterday is quite good, but you can also use magic huh. Next time when I'm coaching you, I'll have the combined techniques of swordsmanship and magic--"
"Rin."
"Ara, I'm sorry, grandfather."

According to the information from Shelna-san, it seems that the duke spoils his grandchild, lady Ringrande.
I've also got a bonus information that tells the third son of the duke who has kidnapped Sera for the [Wings of Liberty] is currently under house arrest under the guise of recuperation in one of the spire.
Confirming on my map, members of [Wings of Liberty], except the ones who have been gathering in earl Bobi's mansion and escaped to the city's suburb, are imprisoned in the dungeon below the castle.

"And so, I'd like you to show off your cooking skill for the ball tonight."
"I do not know what baron-sama has described in regard to my cooking, but I'm only good at making food suited for plebian's palate, as for high class dishes--"

"Come to think of it, Sera has praised your cooking too, you must've won her favor with your cooking haven't you."
"Rin. Leave here if you're going to pick a quarrel with the guest."
"I'm sorry, grandfather, it wasn't on purpose."

The duke seem like he can't match her, he looks down-hearted.

"I do not mean of you to make every dishes in the banquet. I don't mind if you only make that dish called Tempura that Leon's written."
"Then, I will try to live up to duke-sama's expectation despite my shortcoming."

I wasn't able to bring up the matter about the third prince from yesterday, but it'd be better for me to get good impressions from the duke. I'm not thinking of making him my ally, but at least I don't want to make an enemy out of him.
I don't care if the third prince wants to attack me, but it'll be troublesome if he meddles with my companions.

◇

"You good sir over there, I've got just the riight ideas to perk it up."

Arisa, why are you saying it like an underling.

"Say it normally."
"It's okay isn't it, just for a bit."

Summarizing Arisa's suggestions, they're ideas she's got from dishes in manga. I decide to pick something that can actually be made from among those ideas and practice it.
I'm led to a kitchen by a maid, it's become a battlefield for the people who are preparing for tonight.

"Oh, yer', no, err~, you are the noble they exaggeratedly call miracle chef huh, is it?"

This is the first time I've heard that nickname.
Still, he's trying too hard to use polite speechs.

"I'm sorry, our boss is certainly skilled, but he's not good with words, he can't speak polite speech well."

I see.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Satou Pendragon. It's fine for you to speak like usual if you're bad with polite speech."

When I say so, the head-chef and the chef who's followed him plainly look relieved.

"Oh, sorry bout that. I'm an old friend of the head chef at Gururian viceroy's place y'see. He's sent me a letter praising you."

Ah, that person is it. When I got some free times the day after the banquet, I made him teach me how to make the sauce and various techniques.

"Use this place here, it's a bit cramped, but there are all kinds of cooking utensils available. These two here are in charge of miscellaneous chores, call them if you need ingredients."
"Yes, thank you for everything."

I ask an errand boy in the mansion to call Lulu here. Recently, Lulu's cooking skill has become equal to an expert, so if Lulu who knows my way of cooking comes, It'll really help.

◇

I've prepared three kind of dishes.

The first is the tempuras as requested by the duke. The deep-fried food in this world are mostly fried with oils made from animals, but since it looks like it's bad for the body, I use oil from oily-salad-like vegetable. I'm able to make tempura sauce that's more delicious than usual since there are

katsuoboshi in the duke castle's ingredient storeroom, maybe because it can be transported here via the river.
Half of the tempuras are fried and put on the table, and the other half are fried on the spot when someone is going to eat them with the help of Lulu and servers who are standing by near the table, that's the plan.

The second is aspic jellies. It seems to be a normal dish among the commoners, but it's not something that matches the dining table of nobles. Arisa's suggested to make it from colorful ingredients so it looks vivid, and I've unintentionally made its appearance by hand.

Being colorful is one, but there's also another meaning to it--

"Hou, you've splendidly created the crest of our duke's house on the dish."

I'm glad that it seems to be well-received.
However, since it's a family crest, everyone only admires at it, and no one puts their hands on it.

If the gentleman at the prime of his life who was together with lady Ringrande didn't say "Looks delicious", no one would probably have eaten it until the end. I should have thought about the design better.

"Fumu, this is the first time I've tasted this flavor, but it looks like the dish called jelly that has been lost since the era of ancestor king Yamato. It's truly delicious."
"It's true desuwane. This fish thing is delicious, but this red thing is also delicious. ...Kuh, no matter how delicious it is, Sera is off-limit."

This person is really obstinate.

"Hou, he's the man that Rin's mentioned, is he."
"Pleased to meet you for the first time. I'm Satou Pendragon."
"Ooh, the hero-dono of the defensive battle of Muno city is it. Toruma boasted greatly about you. You've also done great in Gururian city I've heard."

This gentleman is the father of lady Ringrande, the next duke.
At any rate, Toruma is the cause huh. Who's a hero. Arisa who's crouching

below the table says in low voice, "Toruma is pretty good at lobbying." Looks like she's shrewdly taking the small dishes and enjoying them.
<TLN: Hero here is written as "Eiyuu", different than the usual hero "Yuusha", which literally means "brave person.">

"Sera is a gentle good child, but she's not suited with the lifestyle of nobles. Moreover, right now she's left the duke house for the temple. If you want to take that child back to the secular life, you have to persuade the Tenion temple's Saintess-sama first."
"The thing about me wooing Sera-sama is a misunderstanding on Ringrande-sama's part--"

I explain myself normally to the next duke, and the misunderstanding is cleared. I wish lady Ringrande follows his example.

"Hou, have you changed your job from a remote hero to a servant?"

The third prince appears wearing young noble-like attires while speaking unpleasantly. Today, he's only bringing the holy knight at the prime of his life along, the battle maniac boy doesn't seem to be here.

There's no need for him to come here deliberately, what a troubling thing to do.

8-11. To the Duke's Castle (2)

Satou's here. There are a lot of women who are light eaters, but it's said that that there are even more women who have another stomach for snacks.
And then, that doesn't change even in the parallel world.

◇

"Prince, he's the favorite of my father. My father and me are also fans of his cookings."

When I was thinking how to deal with the prince who had come to pick a quarrel, the next duke threw the lifeboat.
It seems that the prince has only seen lady Ringrande and me, he looks surprised when he sees the next duke after he calls out to the prince.

As expected, the opponent is too bad, the prince looks troubled. I can see Arisa's smirking face and eyes behind the table. She's giving a peace sign with her small hand. How nostalgic.

"My, your highness Sharlick, so you're here. Please let us hear about the royal capital over here by all mean."

A woman with a somewhat thick make-up appears after she pushes her way through the crowd and invites the prince.
The prince takes advantage of this, says his farewell noncommittally and goes toward those women.

"Fumu, it'll be good if that man mellows a bit more."
"That's impossible. He hasn't changed in 10 years."
"If we're talking about swordsmanship, he's among the best in Shiga kingdom, but..."
"Father, a person's personality isn't proportional to his strength. If it is, then even Masaki will be, more."

Lady Ringrande was about to complain about the hero, but she put her hand on her mouth and lamented her verbal slip.

"Is the Shiga Eight Swords famous?"
"Are you really a noble of this kingdom?"
"Pardon me, it's because I come from the countryside."

As I'm told, the Eight Shiga Swords are titles given to the eight top swordsmen in the holy knight which is the strongest in the kingdom. The prince seems to be a candidate of being one, but he has been given a permission by the king to wear the kingdom's treasure, the holy sword Claiomh Solais.
By the way, the favorite cane of the ancestor king Yamato is to be used by the top imperial court magician in successive generations. It seems the reason why the king doesn't use the holy sword and the cane himself is because Yamato-san has implemented a system where they can only be used by the right person.

◇

After the next duke, and lady Ringrande leave, the young nobles that have been watching us from a distance gather with great interest, they eat the dishes with great relish.
They ask about my relationship with lady Ringrande, but I honestly tell them that I've just been coached in the way of sword by her.
Even though the amount of food should have been quite a lot, they're completely gone before 30 minutes has elapsed. It seems to be the victory of the appeal of deep fried food, and curious-looking dish.

"Sir Pendragon, can I have your time for a bit?"

Lady Karina came with a man companion.
Although I've said 'man companion', it's not something erotic, he's the little brother of lady Karina, and the eldest son of baron Muno, Orion-kun. He's a 14 years old young man who's studying in the duchy capital. I've been wanting to meet him ever since we arrive in the duchy capital, and I've sent letters many times, but it's always been refused due to various reasons, so this is our first meeting.

"If it isn't, Karina-sama. I presume the one there is the next baron-sama. I am Satou Pendragon. Hereafter, Pleased to make your acquaintance."
"Umu, I'm Orion Muno. Chevalier Satou, please be at ease."

Orion-kun introduces himself while nodding coolly. He might be in the age where he wants to be seen as someone's important with all his might. He only speaks in low voice when he's saying his name, the name given by the hero-loving baron is probably to blame. It's unfortunate.
They go toward the dance hall after we chat for a bit. Just in case, I advise them to be careful of the prince.

Right at that time, the dance party finally begins at the center hall. I don't have any intention of making passes on women since it looks like it'll become rumors in the upper society. After all, the unmarried women are all 13-18 years old, they feel somewhat too young so the fact that I don't feel any urge toward them becomes my reason.

Since the guests who are young women have increased, I decide to announce the third dish.

It's milk crepes, Mia's favorite. I've also added strawberry slices in addition to the fresh cream on the crepe since Arisa's found strawberries in the food storehouse.

"My, it smells good desuwa."
"It'll be done soon, so please wait for a bit."

I interpose the fresh cream and the strawberry in the crepes after it's done. Lulu put the finished crepes on the plate. Grabbing them by hands seem to be NG according to the head chef, so I place small fork and knife on it, and pass it to the young noble woman.

The girl's face is beaming after she bites the crepes once. Her face is full of make-up, but only at that time does it looks innocent and appropriate of her age.
The young noble men who've seen that try to invite the girl for a dance when she's finished eating. Go for it, boys and girls.

"Hey wait, don't show me that old man face."

Arisa said so while eating a small crepe below me.
Isn't it fine, I'm just cheering on them.

I continue frying the ordered crepes from the girls while having no time to reply Arisa.
There was no one who mistook me for an employee, maybe due to the expensive-looking clothes I was wearing. Thanks to that, we introduced each other whenever I took order for the crepe, and I memorized more than 100 girl's names. This was the first time that I began to think I should had used a shorter family name.

◇

The ingredients that I've prepared have all exhausted up, so I ask Lulu and Arisa to bring the pre-made fresh cream and strawberries that are being cooled in the kitchen here.

"It smells nice, doesn't it."
"I'm sorry, we've used up all the ingredients, so please wait for half an hour for your turn."
"My, it's quite popular, isn't it."

When I look up, there's the head-miko of Tenion temple.
Why?

"It's been a while, Satou-sama."

Lady Sera has come with her. There are two arrogant-looking priests of Parion and Garleon temples behind the head-miko. Both of them are thin men with white hair. There are miko girls who have been kidnapped with Sera beside her.

We're chatting while waiting for Lulu and Arisa to come back, it seems that the other two miko are also blood relatives of the duke. They're from branch families, unlike Sera who's a direct descendant. The two are alike

since they're relatives, but I can distinguish them easily due to their different black and brown hairs.
Looks like the girls have come here to congratulate Sera's big brother, Tisrad, for his marriage. Since they want to meet him before the wedding day, it's a good opportunity today.

Lulu and Arisa have returned, so I resume the crepe-making. When the crepes enter miko girls' mouths, just like with the noble girl earlier, the composed faces of the miko changes into delighted faces of normal girls. Sera notices the noble girls who are holding back on ordering the crepes due to the miko girls, and suggests to them to move away for a bit.

The crepe's batter is gone halfway through, so I use Freeze Water on the long and narrow melons that Arisa's brought to make sherbets. I've practiced doing this with citrus fruits in order to raise my proficiency in adjusting magic power, so the result is quite good even if the fruit used is different. Since Arisa and Mia who have eaten all the failed products got stomachaches before, this time I only make a few before ending it.

◇

"Chevalier-sama, would you be fine to dance with me?"

I wonder if my face looks like it's easy to invite. I've been invited by girls who seem to have just debuted in the upper society since a while ago. I can dance with no problem thanks to Society skill. Incidentally, I got [Dance] skill.
Several of the girls that I was dancing with invited me to drop by their houses. Apparently it's not because I've become popular, Arisa reminds me that it's because they expect me to bring snacks as presents for visiting their houses.

I don't have any misunderstanding okay?

"You're quite popular aren't you, Satou-sama."
"That's not the case at all. I was invited to dance as thanks for the snacks."
"That's not the case at all."

It was Sera that stepped up.
Even though her words contained some pricks when she first called me out, she began to giggle later.

"Would you dance with me as well?"
"Yes, I'd be happy to."

Lady Ringrande would probably become noisy again, but I couldn't decline her invitation.

"Satou-sama is quite skilled."
"Sera-sama is also quite skilled."
"The [Sama] is unnecessary. I am not a noble anymore, so please call me [Sera]."

As expected, calling her by name would be bad. I feel like Lulu's and Arisa's gazes are stabbing me, even though I can't see them from here.

"Sera-sama, miko is also quite deservedly enough to be called with [Sama]."
"Satou-sama looks so kind, yet also unexpectedly mean."

Pochi said that to me too the other day. I should note it.
The dance ends safely even while I'm being bewildered by Sera who's acting uncannily intimate to me. It's been decided for me to help the Tenion temple distributing food during our stay due to Sera who's surprisingly good at negotiating.

"Thank you for the delicious snacks today. Please get along well with Sera, alright."

The head-miko drops a bomb in a low voice while leaving.

"I will keep the matter of that night a secret, so please don't worry. You look cute behind the mask."

Why is it blown.

◇

"Must be because of your voice."

Arisa said so while looking astonished.
Dang, I had neglected getting strange voice skill. Let's practice it tonight.
But well, the level and the name are completely different, it's probably going to be fine even if I keep feigning ignorance. The head-miko seemed like she was just baiting me too.

"Thank you for waiting, master, Arisa."

Lulu who had been called by the head-chef returned.
It seems she's been invited to work there. Head-hunting like that, I can't let my guard down toward that old man.

We're allowed to leave as the duke's family has left, but the dance party is still continuing, and we can hear the music from here.

"Young lady, how about a song?"
"Y, yes, I'd be happy to."

I dance together with Lulu among the lights from the mansion. I had been dancing with Arisa before Lulu came, but since it was received better than I had thought, I also invited Lulu.

"Ah, this is like a dream."
"I'm glad to hear that."

Lulu and me together continue to dance round and round forever.

"H, hey wait, how long are you two going to dance, please change with me～."
"Ufufu, oh Arisa, you're cute."

I thought that Lulu would stop when she became tired, but since it didn't, the dance continued until Arisa who was jealous intruded.
The three of us continues dancing together while alternating before the

eyes of the maids who occasionally pass through the corridor as if they see something heartwarming.

A day like this is good once in a while.

8-12. Tea Party Days

Satou's here. Tea party was frequently drawn in shoujo manga that I read in my childhood, but I had never seen it even once in reality. The modern tea party might be the drink bar in the family restaurant.

◇

The busy days begins the next day after the ball.

While I keep the visits to the workshops as scheduled, I'm also visiting the noble women whom the invitations for tea parties I've accepted.
Of course, I'm not aiming for the the noble girls in their early teens. I wouldn't let Arisa accompany me if that was really the case.

I can sort of feel some petty grudges from that prince, I have a hunch that I'll get involved with him from now on.
Therefore, I'm following Arisa's suggestion to increase my personal connections with the people that are likely to become my allies in preparation for the time when I get entangled in some kind of intricate conspiracy.

I choose not crepes for the tea party, but something that's delicious served cold. I decide to create western style red bean jam rolls by sandwiching fresh cream, coarse and smooth sweet red bean paste with thin pancakes. I announce the bean jam roll to be a new sweets of Muno city. I write the recipe in the letter for baron Muno that I've entrusted to lady Karina. Gelt-san should be able to reproduce what's in the recipe. I've employed merchants to deliver the ingredients that are hard to obtain in Muno city.

Since it's not good to make the same thing every day, Arisa and I write sweets we remember on the memo, trial-make them, and pick ones that look good. Arisa and the others aren't the only ones who sample the food, the previous earl Walgock couple also ask for it, the food are quite popular. I'm a bit worried that Arisa will become plumper since she eats too much of

it.

I've thought of taking lady Karina along to the tea parties, but she's training hard with Liza and the others, I can't approach her. I'm thinking of letting lady Karina get some noble friends, but it doesn't seem like it'll go well.
Lady Karina, Liza and the others are training with the help of a military drill instructor, a woman around her thirties, who has been introduced by Toruma. They're probably getting better training than just sparing randomly with wooden swords. I've also been watching them occasionally. Of course I mean the training, not lady Karina's specific parts.

I had gained some things beyond my expectation doing the tea parties like getting permission to visit the workshops that had refused it before, and some rare ingredients the noble women shared.

The workshops visits have been going smoothly too, the only two remaining are the scroll workshop, and the barrier pillar workshop.
I've got silk threads produced by caterpillars the size of a puppy from the visit to the jade silk workshop yesterday. These silk threads reflect green color from the light just like the name suggest, and cloths weaved from them have the same stab-proof performances as iron chain mails.
When I look at the bait of the caterpillar with AR secretly, it seems there's a secret to it. The caterpillars are mainly feed with leaves, but they're also feed with mithril slag--wastes that comes out of mithril refinery. The green parts of the silk might be composed of mithril. Since there are the same kind of caterpillar species living deep in the forest, it might be a good idea to try doing it once.

◇

"Eh~, these are some good seats."
"You're right, compared to the crowded seating of the general audience in this arena, the noble guest room is a paradise."

I feel bad for not using the noble guest room that they've reserved for us, so today is the first time we use it. The arena is wider than my expectation, it's probably about as large as the Tokyo Dome. Since it's usually used for

horse-racing matches, these much area are probably necessary.
Originally, there are servants attending the noble guest room, but I refuse since I have my own.

"Master, I've acquired the target for sniping. Please the permission."
"You can't."
"Requesting reconsideration."

Nana looks toward one of the player who has just entered the arena.
Ah, he's the white tigerkin man who seems to be the brother of that guy who's kicked the sea lionkin kid. No, this guy only tried cut me, he didn't do anything to the sea lion kid right?
<TLN: White tiger in japanese = byakko.>

His opponent is a magic warrior who's working as an explorer with delicious sounding name, Tan. He's equipped with a mithril sword like me and a small mithril shield that looks like a buckler. There are only elimination battle for the real match, both their levels are high. Tan-shi is level 42, the white tigerkin is level 37. I'm expecting high level fight too.

"Uu~n, I can't see their status from this distance. Tan who can use magic according to the advance review is probably going to win right."
"Arisa, you can't say that. Don't make light of the range and power of that gigantic great sword in addition to byakko-dono's big body. Tigerkin are war race that possesses both power and speed. You cannot decide the match from whether they can use magic or not."

Oh, Liza is being talkative.
The weapon of Byakko-kun is a great sword made from monsters' parts like Liza's. The offensive power is weaker than Liza's spear. I've had this doubt since a while ago, I feel that Liza's spear is too powerful for a weapon made impromptu. Is it because the materials are rare, or the place is rare, it might even be both.

"Satou, aa~n."

One of the snacks that Mia holds with both hand enters my mouth.
This is a thin-stick candy, I guess? Sugar are cheap in this duchy capital, they're in the form of brown sugar. Half of them are Ugi sugar that have

been brought from earl Kuhano's city. It seems to be cheap since they cultivate the sugar on the great river's downstream. And yet, the price is not at the level where commoners can get their hands on it.

"What's with this?"
"I've bought it."
"A hawker has come to the noble guest room."

Mia only ever uses her pocket money to buy food and drink huh.
Following her, Lulu, Pochi, and Tama have also bought snacks.

"Octopus skewers~"
"I bought squid skewers too no desu."

The two hold three sticks on both their hands. There are enough for everyone, they distribute it one for each.

The match is about to begin.

Ah, our eyes met.
The white tigerkin on the arena turns his great sword toward me while glaring. He still remembers huh. Since there doesn't seem to be any demi-human who participates in the real match, please do your best.

There's a 50 meters wide circle drawn on the center of the arena, and the signal to start the match begin when both competitors enter it. There's no limitation in using magic, but since this is an [Armed Battle] after all, it's a foul if you do something like defeating your opponent with magic from afar.

When the two enter the circle, the official sounds the horn to signal the start of the match.

"The white person is attacking nano desu!"
"Mugumugu~."
"Tama-chan, speak after you've finished eating alright."

Pochi commented after she had finished eating while swinging the skewer, Tama said something while her mouth is full, and Lulu scolded her.

"It seems that the human fights after strengthening himself with buff magic."
"Diversion."
"Nnn~, won't he cut it with just a thrust of that great if diversion is poor~."
"Expansion."
"I'm doubtful it can stop that body weight and speed."
"Mwuu."

It looks like Arisa and Mia are giving opinions from the viewpoints of magicians.

Oh, it looks like the magic warrior use physical reinforcement from water magic. The casting has been completed in 3 seconds, but that spell should have taken twice that, it seems that he's arranged the spell to make it shorter than the standard one. The rest is probably thanks to [Chanting Shortening] skill.

"Master, it comes with a BOOM, and hit with a BANG."
"Liza can win~?"
"I don't intend to go down easily, but I don't feel like I can win in a straight fight."

Pochi and Tama are too excited, so Liza are carrying them on both her hands like they're stuffed dolls. The two aren't minding it, and watch the match with sparkling faces. Their tails and arms are flailing too much I'm afraid that it'll break.

"Uu~n, he's amazing, while handling the attacks from that great sword, he hasn't failed in casting spells even once."
"Calm and composed."

The two are observing the magic warrior's way of fighting while chewing on the snacks that Mia's bought. Lulu politely sweeps the scraps that have fallen from the snacks.

"Master, am I able to move like that?"
"You might be able to if you can use physical reinforcement well, I think. Even Karina-sama has done movements similar to that right?"
"Tama can do it~."

"Pochi will do her best nodesu!"

As for the fight, at a glimpse, byakko-san seems to have the upper hand, but his attacks have all been blocked. The magic warrior has been doing a defensive battle, but he's steadily increasing his buffs. He just has to use Stick Mist next to slow the byakko's movement down, and the match will probably be decided.

It's developing just as I've expected, and the match end with the magic warrior's victory. However, he slowed down the byakko's movement not by water magic, but by using lightning magic to [Enchant] his weapon and paralyzed him with one blow.

Three more matches were held afterwards, but since they were plain matches between two warriors, Mia and Arisa quickly dozed off. It seemed to be favorites of experts, bold cheering could be heard from the elderly on the audience seats.

"Was that a Hakama? That equipment is splendid isn't it. I didn't think that it could conceal footworks to that degree."

Liza eagerly praised the beautiful woman in Japanese clothing that had appeared just now.
Pochi and Tama who have been dropped to the ground are trying to mimic the haorihakama warrior, but they're not doing so well. The haorihakama person has black eyes and hair, but she's not particularly a Japanese it seems.
I take off my shoes to demonstrate the footwork. I know it from a manga that I've read back then, so I don't have any confidence if it's right.

"Like a slug~?"
"It's slimy and closing in nodesu! I'm the slug degozaru~."
<TLN: Pochi uses "Sessha" to refer herself here.>

When Pochi can't do the footwork well, she sprawls on the floor, and moves like an inchworm. I wonder if it's right to retort, "That's not a slug." here?

"Pochi-chan, who's the bad girl who lies on the ground after wearing her best clothes with much effort!"

"A, au, it's not like that nodesu. Lulu, it's not like that nodesu."
"What's not like that? When you do bad things?"
"I'm sorry nano desu."
"Pochi, repent~."

Oops, it was the time to scold her huh. Pochi is doing a pose of remorse and apologizes.
Tama shrewdly take this chance to turn around Lulu who's angry. Wasn't she squatting just now? When our views meet, Tama takes the [Remorse] pose like Pochi in a panic.

◇

"Master, the airship is producing a young organism. Arisa, urgently, create a cushion in the shape of that!"
"Eh~, again~. I'm already tired~, I'll teach you how to do it, so make it yourself okay."
"That's an excellent plan. Arisa, I implore you for the instructions."

Nana was pointing at a small airship that were anchored. It's an express ship that's come from the royal capital. The one riding it is the king--not, it's the king's shadow. The two ministers that have come together with him are the real ones.

I have a hunch that the wagon will be full of stuffed dolls when Nana has learned sewing.
I'm making leather armors and boots from the armored newt's leather and green silk beside Arisa who's teaching Nana how to sew. I'm thinking of copying the magic warrior's armor that's made from monsters' materials, and with shock and stab resistances better than normal iron armor. I got the [Sewing Skill] from making linings with the green silk. Let's maximize the skill and create inners for everyone.

Come to think of it, I've gotten a hold of a cloth called Yuriha fiber from the thieves' hideout. I'll process this and make robes for Arisa and Mia.
Evening of that day, I work at night to create equipment for everyone, and new shoes for Pochi and the others.

It feels like I've become the fairy from fairytale.

8-13. The Viscount and the Scroll Workshop

Satou's here. Sometimes I miss my students day where I get my speed and capacity cut down during programming using integrated development environment because I'm doing it while reading mnemonic binary conversion list.
I don't want to go back to that time though. Technology must progress after all.

◇

Hooked nose, wrinkled brow, well-cared mustache, and properly swept-back deep blond hair. I can feel strong will from his eyes overflowing with vigor.

Is he really the brother of Toruma?

I can see Toruma's father standing beside him. He looks somewhat old, you wouldn't think that he's still 34 years old.

"Thank you for saving Toruma."

It's weird. Even though I'm being thanked, it feels like being scolded by my boss.
That was Toruma's brother, viscount Hosaris Shimen.

"I'm sorry, Satou-dono, my brother can only talk like this."
"How rude. Toruma, what's wrong with the way I talk."

His words itself are normal, but the way Hosaris talks feels like a stubborn master who's scolding his poor pupils. In fact, I can feel Arisa radiating drooling-like presence. I can't help but feel that she's leaking gleaming aura that's unusual.

My biggest concern, that is the permission to visit the workshop, is given

without problem.
I'm also alloted to the the first in line, though maximum priority is impossible, for the promised matter about scrolls as compensation for Toruma's dagger.

"Is that so, you've got into troubles with his highness Sharlick, sir Pendragon, you have to be careful. His highness tends to easily settle disputes with violence."

According to Hosaris-shi, the prince is also regarded as a troublemaker in the royal capital. About 10 years ago, he laid his hands on the daughter of a lord who had been decided to marry (someone else), in no time at all, one earl territory was on the verge of rebelling against Shiga kingdom. This matter was also the reason for the cancellation of the engagement between lady Ringrande and the prince.
Originally he should have been confined in a remote monastery, or rather a royal villa away under the pretense of recuperating from sickness, but he could be forgiven if he succeed as a holy knight due to his excellent swordsmanship. The bad rumor didn't die out even after he had become a holy knight, but it seemed that he hadn't caused any big problem like he did with the territory lord before.

How could they gave that kind of human a holy sword.

◇

"So then, the ink made from the dew on the fireflies lily~"
"We certainly will be able to operate the bestowal stand with precision using that ink, but how much do you think it is."
"But aren't Dragon Scales and Drill Powder that Jung-san's mentioned impossible to get~"

I can hear people's voices beyond the open door on the hallway.
They're probably the scroll craftsmen whom Hosaris-shi has called.

"Master, welcome back."
"Hosaris-sama, welcome back!"

An obese middle-aged man to the point of overweight, and a freckled bespectacled little girl with short ash blond hair welcomed us in the room. The woman who's a gnome isn't beautiful by any measures, but she can't be called ugly either.

"The one here is Jung, the workshop manager. Despite his looks, he's the expert of scroll-making in Shiga kingdom. The girl over there is Natalina. When it comes to creativity, she's the best in the workshop. They will meet sir Pendragon's expectation without fail."

Creative, in other words, she produces strange scrolls that won't sell, and use money like they're growing on trees for the sake of inventions. She's certainly suited for my purpose.

After introducing the two, Hosaris-shi leaves the room followed by Toruma. He's entered the room just to greet them, so there is no problem.

◇

I show list of scrolls that I want to Jung-san for him to confirm their feasibilities, but the ones that contain advanced level magic aren't possible after all.
Moreover, they won't accept magic that are used by criminals, and spy like [Fake Patch], and [Unlock].

The crime related things are no good even though the battle related ones are okay huh.

And yet, [Through Eyes], and [Mana String] that can be used to open lock depending on its usage are alright.

In order to create a particular scroll, the person who finishes the scroll has to be able to use that particular magic skill, so [Gravity], [Shadow], [Mind], and [Ghost] magic are impossible.
'Then, you can make [Space] magic?' is my expectation, but it seems the they can only make [Space], and [Destruction] scrolls at only elementary

level.
As for holy magic scrolls, they can't be made mainly due to religious reason. It's technically possible huh.

"Hey, chevalier-sama. I understand that you're a collector, but even if you use the magic in this list, none of them will produce any good result you know? Is it really okay?"
"Natalina, use polite speech a bit better."
"Eh~ I'm using it properly right? Chevalier-sama."
"They're a bit broken, but I'm an upstart myself, so if it's difficult for you to use polite speech, it's alright to use normal speech."

When she hears that, Natalina-san says, "You sure? Yay." while banzai-ing, and Jung-san knocks her head.
I promise that I won't complain even if the effects of the spells line-up in the list turn out weak. They have half of the spells in stock, so half of the request are complete.

"These are some strange spells aren't these? They're easy but it's awfully inefficient. I don't think they're at elementary levels, but it'll be hard to use them due to the long chants."

The spells in this world are like [Spaghetti Source] seen in programming. They're like assemblers in the era where there are only powerless CPU long ago, interwoven like puzzles. That's why it was extremely hard to analyze them, to the point that I was suspicious that it was deliberately obfuscated. Therefore, when I was making my own spell, I modularized the spells into functions in accordance to the paradigm of structured programming. As the result, the spells had became extremely readable, but it also introduced disadvantages; the chanting became longer, and increased MP consumption. The traditional spells have probably been optimized after going through long years.

"You can't make them into scrolls?"
"Ah, that thing is alright. They're a bit strange, but it doesn't seem like they're deviated from nature magic, so it feels like I can somehow do it."

Natalia-san used poor polite speech until the end, probably because Jung-san was glaring at her.

"Then Chevalier-sama. Since it'll need some times to prepare the stocks, would you like to look at the workshop in the meantime?"
"Yes, by all means."

I take Arisa along to visit the workshop. The workshop is in the basement of the viscount's mansion site, there are many guards who are on the lookout vigilantly. All the guards are higher than level 20, and they have skills that are composed for spy prevention like [Sharp Eyes], and [Surveillance].

The workshops are divided into numerous small rooms for handling specific processes. Therefore, there are only a few people who knows the entire process. It looks inefficient, but since it's important to hide the technology, it's quite thorough.

It seems that the scroll's papers are made in another place, their appraisal results describe them as [Scroll Blank Sheet, Second]. From the two's conversation, I understand that the ink needs fine powder made from magic cores. The reason why the viscount went to the royal capital was to purchase magic cores with high purities. Looks like you'll need magic cores from level 30 or higher monsters to create intermediate level scrolls. When they show me the cores for the manufacturing, the red tinges on it looks a bit deeper in color compared to the cores from armored newt back then.

"We make inks in this room."

Jung-san slightly opens the door to show the inside, looks like they can't let me enter. They're making [Ink for Scroll, Shell] here. I understand the materials in general, but one of them is [Ink for Scroll, Second]. This is quite tough.

Even though it's called making scroll, they need more than just writing the spells in the exclusive paper, many processes are required. For that reason, I have to wait 2-4 days for the readily-made ones, and add 1-2 days in the case of order-made ones.

The spells that are in stocks are as follow:

Nature Magic: Flexible Shield (Intermediate)

Nature Magic: Flexible Armor (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Through Eyes (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Mana Transfer (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Mana Drain (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Break Magic (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Magic Hand (Intermediate)
Nature Magic: Magic String
Earth Magic: Polish
Earth Magic: Mould
Water Magic: Remove Poison (Intermediate)
Water Magic: Aqua Heal (Intermediate)
Water Magic: Water Heal
Wind Magic: Canopy

They're mostly sample products without recipient. It seems the oldest one is from over 100 years ago.

They're one gold coins for three elementary level scrolls, and two gold coins for one intermediate level ones. The original ones were going to cost me three gold coins, but since I permitted them to copy the spell, it became one gold coin instead.
These kinds of negotiations are Arisa's forte, but when I considered that she would firmly demand sexual harassment as her rewards, I thought that it'd be better if I just paid them more.

Even though there are plain magic like [Polish], and [Mould], among the stocks, I'm happy. With this, I won't need to create sand mould or wood model for casting.

I was looking for multiple small shield magic that Raka used during the fight against the demon in Gururian city--I was taught that it's called [Multi Mana Scale]--in the stocks, but I couldn't find it.
I consulted to them if they could make it, but since it seemed to be an advance level nature magic, it was not possible. It's unfortunate.
They told me the anecdote that it was originally developed to reproduce the multi small shields the wild boar king used in nature magic, but I couldn't say to them that it needed more work as compared to the real thing that I had seen. Or maybe, it could be equal if the skill level is high?

The order-made ones are as follows:

Nature Magic: Light Stun (Original)
Nature Magic: Remote Stun (Original)
Nature Magic: Sound Record (Original)
Nature Magic: Photo (Original)
Nature Magic: Magick Sword (Original)
Water Magic: Liquid Control (Original)
Wind Magic: Air Control (Original)
Lighting Magic: Electronic Control (Original)
Fire Magic: Fireworks (Original)
Light Magic: Fireworks Illusion (Original)

Space Magic: Clairvoyance
Space Magic: Clairhearing
Space Magic: Telephone

Life Magic: Soft Wash
Life Magic: Dry
Life Magic: Bandage

I've limited the power of stun type magic for inter-personal matters. The recording and photography are for recording and taking photo during the sightseeing. The control type ones are for when I'm making magic tools. The other ones than these are too plain and minor that they don't usually make them in scrolls.

The through eyes is not for making clothes look to be transparent. I'd have thought so if I was in my teens, but its use is for observing the states of things during creation of magic swords.

Magick Sword is a magic that produces a transparent straight swords. The idea came to me after I saw the painting of Yamato-san in the museum. Transparent swords are truly fantasy-like.

In reality, magick sword was supposed to be an intermediate magic, but it seemed that it had touched Natalia-san's heartstring, it was treated like the other original magic.

In the end, the matter about scrolls that were slightly over my budget at hand was balanced out.

When the workshop tour is over, Jung-san tells me about the expected date for the completion of the scrolls. Since the person who can use space magic just happens to be present, the [Clairvoyance], [Clairhearing], and [Telephone] can be done in three days, while [Air Control] will be done in five days. The other magic are after those. The people who can use life magic are particularly in vacation for the tournament, so the work will start after the tournament has ended.

When we were going home, it was hard to take away Nana who had remained with Mayuna-chan.

8-14. The Night before the Final

Satou's here. Back then, I imagined that auction was like a place where the wealthy were dealing with work of arts and jewelries with outrageous prices. My child's mind thought that work of arts should have been better put in the museum.
Nowadays, net auction is what comes to my mind (if I hear the word), Satou's.

◇

"Did something good happen? Satou-san."

Today I've come to help distributing food. After helping with the distribution for several times, lady Sera has changed her honorific calling for me from [Sama] to [San]. She's calling me like Zena-san is, but I feel shy when she does it. Mia will kick me if I'm acting shy, so I reply calmly.

"Yes, some difficult works have been going well."

Thanks to the many scrolls I've acquired from viscount Shimen's mansion recently, I'm able to nicely make magic swords with casting. That said, it's only at the level of the wooden holy sword I've made back then, so it's nothing but a first step. I can't see the prospect for the forging process.

In the book [30 Standard Circuits for Magic Tools] that I've bought back then, there are various circuits that look usable for making magic swords, so I'm going to attempt them one by one. There is also this interesting circuit for making airship, but seems that it needs materials from a monster that flies in the sky called Air Fish. They normally fly around over the open sea, so obtaining the materials is difficult.

"Master, some children who misses the food distribution have come, can we do something about them?"

"There were a lot of adults today after all~"

Lulu and Arisa have brought along two dogkin children like Pochi, and three ratkin children. Their ages are about 4-8 years old. Pochi is about to distribute some baked sweets that she's taken from her pocket. Since Lulu has educated her many times, the baked sweets aren't put directly in her pocket, but properly wrapped in a handkerchief.

"Hehen, thanks for it~"
"Bye~ now~ dog girl~"

Apekin children quickly snatched the baked sweets from Pochi's hand and ran toward the alleyway.
Due to the sudden turn of event, Pochi blinks for a while, and then yells "Wait nodesu! Stealing is bad, nano desu~" while running after the culprits.

"Liza, Tama, please."
"Yes!""Roger~"

I ask the two, and they run after Pochi. It'd be bad if she became a lost child. I ask Nana to take the five hungry children to the stalls nearby and get them something to eat. I remind Nana not to give them something that's too expensive. Nana has a soft spot on [Young Organisms] after all. Well, Arisa is following them, so it's probably alright.

Soon, Pochi and Tama carry the apekin children while holding them overhead. They're tied with rope from somewhere.

"Master, I've caught the culprits nodesu."
"Sinners, to the gallows~"
"What should we do? They'll be dealt accordingly if we hand them over to the authority."

Liza, did you use [Dealt], not [Judged], just now?
I'm too scared to ask her.
<TLN: They both sounds the same, but written differently.>

The two little thieves are saying, "Sorry", "Won't do it again", but they probably don't really regret it. They'll either end up being slaves or

beheaded if we turn them over to the authority. Even in the duchy capital, demi-humans criminals are given harsh punishment.
Let's leave making a mess of someone's life just because of baked sweets to that french-bread like person. I forgive them by only flicking their foreheads gently.
The children are holding their foreheads while rolling on the groudn, such exaggerated acting... or it should have been. Pochi and Tama hold their foreheads while looking like it's really painful. Strangely, even Arisa and Mia hold their foreheads.

I tell Liza to untie them, and have them help cleaning-up after the food distribution. The apekin children are helping with the work while calling Pochi, "Ane-san". They don't seem to have learned their lessons, they try to take the baked sweets from Pochi pocket, and get found out by Tama who then obstruct them. Pochi who's angry downs them with her fist, and they roll on the floor like before. Judging from the decrease of their HP, Pochi seems to have properly held back.

"Hey, Onee-chan miko."

Miko? Miko huh.

"What's the matter?"
"The adults are saying something like the demon lord will be revived."
"The end of an era. Everyone is going to die, they says."
"Will everyone die?"

Not only demi-humans children, human children are also encircling Sera with worried faces.
This was a topic that had come out during tea parties too, typical of the demon lord season to be the end of an era, looked like pessimistic views, and downfall were popular to discuss about. In addition it seems that the vibrations from my experiments with Arisa late at night had reached the ground above, and it became a rumor that it might be an omen for the demon lord revival. For that reason, the next day after that, I dug deep for two hours until a very deep layer to do the experiment there.

"It's alright, it won't happen, the hero will surely eliminate the demon lord."
"Nn."

"It's okay~"
"Master will beat down something like demon lord, like ZUBABAN, nodesu."
"Master, you have a serious responsibility aren't you."

Pochi and Tama hug my waist while looking up with sparkling eyes. Lulu says so happily, but she must not have seriously thought so. Only Arisa who knows the truth looks like she has mixed feelings. It's said that ignorance is bliss.

◇

"Good evening, head miko-sama."
"Ara, Nanashi-san. You're elusive like always."

She looks her age when I see her in the duke's castle back then, but for some reason, she looks young in this room.

"I've come here today to ask about the oracle regarding demon lord."
"Ara? You've annihilated it right? The oracle from Tenion-sama has told us that it's 『Annihilated』."
"It must have been defeated by a passing hero."
"Ufufu, let's leave it like that."

She laughs lightly you wouldn't think it comes from an old woman.
Oops, rather than that, I should confirm it.

"There are rumors among people on the streets that the demon lord is hiding itself in the underground of the duchy capital. Did the temple not announce that the demon lord have been annihilated?"
"I've told his excellency the duke directly, but the 『Annihilated』 oracle haven't come to the other temples, so we can't announce that the demon lord has been annihilated from Tenion temple alone."

Don't tell me, there are other demon lords out there?
I'd hate it if there's something like the great demon lord.

I return the resurrection artifact that has been filled with magic during our

conversations to the head miko. I put back the holy sword that has acted as a battery replacement into the item box.

"Thank you, Nanashi-san. I prefer that there won't be a situation where this is needed."
"I'd love that."

When I'm about to leave, I'm given something by head miko-san.

Indulgence.

It's not the same thing as the one for collecting money in the previous world, it's an item that lets you erase one crime that has been etched in the Reward and Punishment. It's not clear what the head-miko intends to do by giving it to me, but since it looks useful, I quietly accept it.

◇

I put on one of the wig that I've got on the downtown, and walk into the night town in Nanashi-style. There are many gentlemen who are walking around in the red district dressed with thin hooded overcoats, so I'm unexpectedly inconspicuous.

My expenditures have increased ever since I've become a noble, so I'm visiting the dark auction that's secretly open during the martial art tournament. It requires a written invitation to enter, but since a lot of nobles who have been sacrificed for the demon lord carry it, I have it in my storage without doing anything.

Since you can employ agents, I decide to dispatch one. The commission fee is one silver coin for each displayed item that has to be paid even if they don't sell. The agent will take 10% charges if the item is sold at higher price than the minimum fee. Since I'm told that items that don't have appraisal's report won't sell well, I have the official appraisal in the auction hall to issue them. There are 10 official appraisals, and even though they all have dark circles under their eyes, they all smile amazingly. It's probably the best season literally. I unintentionally give the person a stamina recovery potion.

I'm going to exhibit medicines and weapons.

The medicine is magic potions with Nanashi sign that increase vitality and partly health.

I realized that they would sell well from the conversations of the family heads old men during the tea parties. It's no different in any world. The raw materials are from armor newt, so I can make them as many as I like, and the market price is also quite expensive. It'll be troublesome if the person who takes the medicine die during the intercourse, so I've lowered the quality to some extent.
I had brought 10 sets with five items per set I made, but they sold at higher price than I expected. I guess I should try making hair regrow and breast enlarger medicine next time.

The weapons are mock magic weapon made from monster's materials, and the result of trial-runs from the magic swords casting. I've got the title [Blacksmith of Magic Swords] when I'm casting the magic sword.

As for the weapons from monster's materials, spears, swords, and bows were selling well among the people who looked like explorers or guards. People who look like nobles were buying the casted magic swords. That person who's buying it looks a bit familiar. I confirm with AR, he's the military accountant of the duke. The knight who looks like an escort generates magic edge when he pours mana into it. He seems to be quite a user.

He's generously paying 100 gold coins for each, but is he fine spending that much? I'm worried even though it's someone else problem. They're casted from weapons I've got from the thieves' hideout and then melted, the magic liquids are also of common quality, so each of them costs almost zero to produce. Even if the materials are bought, it probably only costs two gold coins at most. The rip-off is only the best part.

The military accountant approaches the agent, and asks if he can provide another 10. Since I can make 10 of it even if I just have one hour, I accept it. The next auction will be held in about three days, so I promise to bring it in the final day.

I get 780 gold coins in total.
It's the sum after the agent's fee of course. The biggest earner is the five casted magic swords that have been sold for 570 gold coins. There are money to be made everywhere indeed.

Since I've made more money than I've planned, I also bid in the dark auction to also reduce the market. Mixed among magic tools, they're exhibiting things like, fallen young noble women, illegal medicines, or medicine to level up. Since the AR tells that the level-up medicine is [EXP +1000], it's meaningless for me. I've bid a drop item from the labyrinth city for 70 gold coins. The price is lower than I've thought, but looks like it's extraordinary even for a disposable item.

It seems that I also have to use the agent for buying things, so I request one. Several magic books and three scrolls. They're things that only appear in dark auction, it greatly smells of crime.

Nature Magic: Fake Patch
Nature Magic: Unlock
Nature Magic: Lock

They're scrolls that have been refused in viscount Shimen's scroll workshop.

The last day is going to exhibit the featured products like, [Princess of the Fallen Kingdom], [Monograph of Ancient Language], and [Air Force Engine of Airship]. Princess of the Fallen Kingdom, she can't possibly Arisa's and Lulu's sister right?

◇

After I've recharged myself in the pleasure quarter, I mass produce magic swords in the usual open space at the interior part of the underground labyrinth. Since I got tired along the way, I also made many spear and halberd type ones. The production cost of halberd is high, but it's also the most expensive in the dark auction, so I make them. There was a circuit for changing mana into electricity written in the standard magic circuit book,

so I added it to the halberd afterward. It seem that the users can get electrified if they put wrong amount of mana into it, so I've also added a protection circuit on it.

>Title [Blacksmith of Magic Weapons]

Even though I've used Deodorant to erase the trace, they still find out that I've gone to the pleasure quarter. Women's intuitions are sharp even though they're small.

It seems that the king will also attend the tournament's final tomorrow. Moreover, lady Ringrande and the prince are going to do an exhibition match before the final. If a disturbance is going to happen, it's either during that match or the wedding.

The prince and his cohorts don't seem to be in contact with the [Wings of Liberty]. It seems the earl's mansion from before has been discovered, the members' number have been halved. The people who have escaped from the hardships are hiding in the sewer.
Since it looks like they'll be decapitated if they're captured, they have no choice but to enter it and can't come out. If possible I want them to make it into their dwellings and live their remaining life quietly please.

8-15. The Day of the Final

Satou's here. There's this famous quote from Shakespeare, "To be, or not to be", but I thought that it was a quote from some battle manga character until after I had entered high school, such was my dark past. Everyone has ever misunderstood something right.

◇

Today Tama has been acting strange since the morning.

Just when I thought that she's walking randomly in the room, she quarrels with Pochi, then Arisa, or rather, she clings to them and rolls on the floor.

"What's wrong? Tama."
"Nn~? Something is itching~"
"Pun pun nanodesu!　Today's Tama is strange nodesu."
<TLN: "Pun pun" is an onomatopoeia, kind of like hmph, but cuter.>

Oh? Pochi looks unusually touchy too.
Tama thrusts herself on my lap which has Mia sitting on it as if she's pushing her, and then she's snuggling on my lap. I wonder what's wrong? It's rare for her to cut in by force.

"Chevalier-sama, are you not going to watch the final match today?"
"Yes, I've been asked to make the feast for the celebration of the final, so I'm going to go to the castle after a bit."

I hear that several nobles have asked the duke's butler. Only upper nobles are allowed to participate in the balls and banquets that the king will attend for the next several days, I can't participate on them. As expected they can't say that I have to cook on the balls and banquets I won't participate in.
In that regards, the celebration today isn't only attended by the winner and nobles, but also the martial artists who have participated in the main matches, and influential people of the duchy capital, so I've been asked to

make several dishes like on the ball before.

Since the king seems to be attending the final today, lady Karina and her brother are also going to attend.

It looks like Tama has calmed down after I gently brush her back, she's sleeping with difficult face.

Right at that time, the duchy capital shocks.

◇

It was not an earthquake.
It was like an active sonar from a submarine, a signal from search magic was passing through once.
However, the power was not ordinary.

"What was that? Just now?
"Signal?"
"Some kind of bell sound has come nodesu!"
"Master, ready for battle."

Not only me, it seems that half of the members have perceived the signal earlier.
The reason why Tama has become emotionally unstable is probably because she's sensed the antecedent.

Liza has started equipping the new equipments I've given her the other day. Slightly later, Pochi and Nana have also began to change. My eyes are happy, but I can't keep watching it, so I ask Lulu to put a partitioning screen before Nana.

"Tama, change your clothes too."
"Aye~"

According to the map, demons have appeared. They're in the sky above the arena.

The arena is populated with 20 people who are higher than level 40, in addition to lady Ringrande, the prince and his companions. The demons have picked the wrong time. They probably would be eliminated before I could intervene.

"What's happened?"
"It's the demon again."
"Eh~, again~"

Really, I wish they learn some self-restraint soon.

Arisa and the others are also changing to the new equipments I've created the other day. It's thinner than Liza's, but they're all matching white leather. I've replaced everyone's weapon except Liza's with casted magic swords. They look quite different from the ones I've sold on the auction before, and the inscriptions are carved with 'Satou Pendragon'.

Looks like the demons can use [Summoning Magic], [Mind Magic], and [Fire Magic]. They likely will summon various things if they're given time, so let's dispose of them quickly.

After a bit of time has elapsed after everyone's began changing, the sound of duchy capital's alarm, the town bell, begins resounding.

◇

The nobles' houses on the duchy capital have underground shelters in preparation of demons' attack. These shelters are built abnormally strong for the sake of the nobles' own safeties. The ones that are in the upper noble house have the same strength as the outer wall even.
A bit later after the alarm have rung, a maid of this mansion comes to lead us to the shelter.

"Arisa."
"Hoi, hoi~"
"Please take refuge to the underground shelter with everyone. I'll send you a signal if it gets truly dangerous, I want you to immediately teleport to the

underground labyrinth with everyone if that happens."
"Aye aye."

I guess this is alright for the anti-demons measure.
I'm asking Liza and the others to deal with another troublesome thing.

"Liza."
"Yes!"
"The carriage of lady Sera is being chased by villains. Go with Mia and Nana by horses to protect her."
"I understand."
"I understand, master."
"Nn."

It seems that all members of the wings of liberty are trying to kidnap lady Sera.
I can go help her directly, but it'll be troublesome if some strange flag gets raised, so I'll leave it to Liza and the others. They should be able to handle it with their strengths. Since lady Sera seems to be escaping toward this mansion, I teach the general route to Liza and the others.

◇

I go together until the duke's castle, refuse to enter the shelter, and go out.
I change into Nanashi, silver masked hero version, and go toward the arena.

For the time being, I activate the new magic [Clairhearing], and [Whisper Wind] to grasp the situation. The focus is the arena where I'm going.

"'Demon, no demon lord, your fate is over now.'"

This voice, it's the prince. It is a level 71 demon, but it's not the demon lord you know?

It's chaotic there, but precisely because it's the final of the martial arts tournament, a lot of domestically influential and powerful people are there, so they haven't been overran it seems.

"'Brave warriors, let's cooperate together to subjugate the monsters. Magician, prioritize supporting the warriors with reinforcement magic over attack magic.'"

This voice is lady Ringrande's.
I guess the demons have summoned monsters as their soldiers, people beside the prince are fighting them. Among the monsters that have been summoned, there are more than 10 with upper level 40. Looks like explorers, knights, and martial artists are cooperating together to fight the high level monsters. The clamor that I can hear is very lively. They probably really like the fighting.

"'Barrier, put up the barrier defense.'"
"'It's no good, the escape passages are collapsed, we have to secure the way out.'"

I thought that it's strange the nobles aren't escaping even though the king body-double is going, so it's because of that. Clairhearing and Whisper Wind are convenient.
I guess the passages for general audiences are fine, people are rushing out from there. There doesn't seem to be anyone who dies from getting trampled. Since most of them seem to be hot-headed people, the worry is needless.

Using Sky Drive and Ground Shrink, I go to the top of one of the spire near the arena, and stand there.
There demon has two heads, yellow skin, and two water buffalo-like horns on its shoulders. Since it has two heads, I wonder if that means it can use magic simultaneously like the golden wild boar-head king.

I want to tell "Read the air" to lady Ringrande and the other skirmishing people, but since there are people I know in the arena, let's quickly clean this up.
First, I guess I'll defeat that important looking upper demon with [Laser] of light magic.

As if waiting for the decision, the space is cracking and a ship is appearing.

While producing ripple of lights as if coming out of water surface, a silver streamlined ship that looks like a space ship appears.
A man wearing blue armor--the hero, Hayato Masaki, is standing on the bow. I'm told that he was level 61 when Arisa met him, but he's level 69 now.

"'The great me, has arrived!'"

I wonder if that words are laden with provocation skill, the flying monsters are heading toward the hero.

"'Hou, hero Hayato, are you prepared to die by appearing in front of us?'"
"'Don't think that I'm always going to be the old me! I'll have my revenge today!'"

I can end it in an instant with [Laser] now. But it's hard to shoot it.

"'Fall back you dog of Saga empire! I'll prove that hero is not the monopoly of Saga empire.'"

It's the prince. You should've leave it to him.

"'<<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais'"

The <<DANCE>> earlier seems to be some kind of password. Claiomh Solais leaves the prince's hand while shedding blue light, and assails the yellow-skinned demon. Oh~ the picture that I saw in the museum back then doesn't seem to be an exaggerated lie.

Ah, it's repelled.
Claiomh Solais sure is weak.

"'The holy sword will cry, prince. That demon is the chief executive of the great demon lord of old--golden wild boar-head king. The highest class demon who has survived for several hundred years. You should withdraw if you don't want to die. <<SING>> Arondight.'"

After receiving the password from the hero, Arondight that he's holding is furiously shedding holy light.

I wonder if there are passwords like that for the holy swords I have? I've become able to read explanations of magic tools thanks to the book of magic tools, but it only has magic tools from the present day written in it, so I'm still not able to read the holy swords'. If it's just passwords, I probably can decipher it, let's check it out when I get some free time.

The hero's companions who have appeared from the ship put reinforcement magic to the hero. Out of curiosity, I use [Clairvoyance] magic, but I shouldn't have done it.

A priest-like beautiful woman of loose fluffy-type kyonyuu casts reinforcement magic. The mole under her eye looks good.
An archer-like long ears-kin woman is intercepting monsters approaching the hero. One arrow splits into 10 along the way and swoop down the monsters. Judging from the red light that it had let out, it was probably a magic arrow.

The monsters that have escaped the archer's attacks lands on the ship, but they got quickly eliminated by a light warrior, and a twin-sword warrior. Those girls also of ears-kin. A tiger ears-kin, and a wolf ears-kin. The tiger ears has ponytail, and the wolf-ears has short hair, they're both beautiful women with well-shaped breasts.

The last one is a beautiful woman with enormous breasts and luxurious blond hair holding a long cane. She seems to be comparable to lady Karina. She's doing something drawn-out, and begins chanting a spell.

In short, the followers are all glamorous beautiful women.

Riajuu, go explode.

What should I do.
Should I clean this up while being like Toruma by not reading the mood.

To shoot, or not to shoot, that is the question.

8-16. The Day of the Final (2)

Good grief, what a farce.

Even if the king is attending, why do I absolutely have to do a mock battle with the prince?
Moreover, the prince is using the holy sword, Claiomh Solais. It's a sword that embodies the [Invincible] Shiga kingdom.
<TLN: Remember, the one who was supposed to do the mock battle with the prince is Ringrande.>

There's no way I can win.

The person who holds the holy sword Claiomh Solais must never lose. That is because doing so means suggesting that the invincible Shiga kingdom is defeated.
Losing is not permitted even if it's just a fantasy.

Although, even if I don't deliberately try to lose, the prince should be slightly stronger than me if we exclude magic.
I can't win unless I use my trump card. If I use it, I would undoubtedly kill the prince. As expected, that's bad.

Aah, this is depressing.

◇

I can hear people from the audience seat cheering my name. There are also cheering for the prince, but isn't it because of the [Prince] title I wonder.

I'm wearing the magic armor Chaftar that I've got when I became the hero's follower, while shouldering the lightning great sword I've got from when I was a labyrinth explorer. The armor grants the same effect as physical reinforcement magic to the person who's wearing it. I can produce mana shield and magic for blocking sniping if I put mana into the magic circuit.

I enter the circle for the match.

Right when the match starts, I invoke the mana shield. Following that, I put mana into the lightning great sword, and activate the lightning edge.

I feel a bad premonition before I can add up physical reinforcement magic, I jump to the side.

A firebolt goes through where I was.

Firebolt Wand?
<TLN: I've just found out that the author uses "Wand" instead of "Cane" to translate 杖 , so I'm going to use that from now on. Might revisit older chapters to correct it but it'll be a PITA...>

That's not a military weapon.
It's not something that you should use without chanting you know?

"Nostalgic right? This is the thing you've made in the school after all."

The prince attacks while drawing blue trails with the holy sword.
What speed.

The legend that states the holy sword (Claiom Solais) user flies in the sky might be true.

I ward the holy sword away with my great sword.
Heavy. My wrist is really hurt.

The lightning clad on the great sword transmitted to the holy sword, and got uneventfully scattered away in the air.
Even though he would have fainted or paralyzed if he had used a normal sword.

Returning the favor, I swing the great sword to the prince's legs.
He invokes the defense film (Barrier) of the holy knight armor and block the great sword.

As expected of the equipment of the kingdom's strongest, the holy knight.

This time I'll entrust my armor to block the prince's sword, and focus my attention to attacking.

Executing Heavy Blow skill. The aim and accuracy are lower, but right now, I need might.

Executing Magic Edge skill. I don't usually use it since it's a waste of mana, but there's no meaning in preserving mana right now.

The great sword is tinged with red light.

Executing Sharp Edge skill. I don't want to kill the prince, but if I don't fight with the intention to kill, I won't be able to penetrate that armor's defense.

"Furious Whirlwind Blade"
<TLN:Senpuretsuha>

I shout the technique's name even though there's is no need to do that.
Looks like I've been infected with Hayato's foolishness.

I was sure that it'd be blocked, but it easily breaks the armor's barrier.
This is bad, he'll surely die if I don't stop.

I managed to stop the blade before the prince received a fatal hit.
However, the prince doesn't miss my unstable posture.

I was splatted to the arena's ground like a ball.

◇

Cheering, screams, and jeers.

It seems I've lost my consciousness for an instant.
The prince shoots pursuing firebolts rapidly. Are you trying to kill me?

It appears that his swelled pride is hurt because I stopped the sword earlier.
The prince's eyes have scarily turned bloodshot.

I chant Quick Burst to destroy the firebolts.

However, our fight ends here.

Summoning circles are formed in the sky.

Thatisdangerous.

My intuition tells me the danger as if my head is split.
I begin to chant Break Magic magic. Not good, the prince hasn't realized the summoning circle in the sky. He only looks at me.

I stop the chanting in order to avoid the prince's attack.
I shouldn't have stopped the blade earlier if I knew that it'd turn out like this.

I wasn't able to stop the summoning.
A yellow-skinned demon appears from there. That presence and coercion, it's unmistakably an upper demon. The vibration from the massive body, taller than five meters, that lands on the ground almost makes me fall.

Hayato said this before.

He had only ran away from a demon once.
At that time, half of his companions sacrificed themselves in order to let him escape, he said so while looking so frustrated. I couldn't believe how that absurdly strong Hayato could lose, but I understand now.

That's an order of magnitude different.

Is a demon lord even stronger than that?

It's impossible.
Absolutely impossible.

My soul, not reasoning, is screaming. I want to immediately escape from

here now.
The words that helps me keep my heart that was on the verge of breaking comes from an unexpected person.

◇

"Demon, no demon lord, your fate is over now."

Prince, how are you not able to measure the opponent's strength. He doesn't seem to be bluffing. If, at this time, I had any interest in a man who can bluff to a person with absolute strength, I might not had canceled the engagement.

The demon lord tilts its head to the side, and looks at the prince's sword interestedly.

"That sword is Claiom Solais right? A descendant of Yamato eh."

I wonder what's the some kind of howl sound I hear when the yellow-skinned demon is talking. It's the other head of the demon that's chanting. In order to interfere with the summoning, I throw Quick Burst to the yellow-skinned demon.

It's no good.
The demon casually defends against the weak elementary magic with its hand.

I need more more than speed!
I execute Chanting Shortening and chant Explosion. It probably won't make it. However, I won't let this spell go to waste.

When the yellow-skinned demon complete its chanting, monsters begins appearing from the magic circles that are formed on the ground. Centipedes, scorpions, praying mantis, and even two-horned beetles.

It won't be easy fighting them while dealing with the yellow-skinned demon. The magic Explosion just now didn't give it much damage too.

Oh right, there are the participants of the main match and their friends still. Let's leave the monsters to them.

I call out to the warriors on the place using amplification magic.

"Brave warriors, let's cooperate together to subjugate the monsters. Magician, prioritize supporting the warriors with reinforcement magic over attack magic."

The people who have been fighting the monsters separately begin to cooperate together.
They're veterans. They probably won't lose to monsters as long as there are chances.

A centipede monster is attacking. The prince is also being attacked by a rhinoceros beetle monster.

"Fumu, the hero isn't here after all de~su. The souvenirs that I've brought have no meaning then."
<TLN: The demon is saying desu in katakana, which means death.>

While grumbling, the yellow-skinned demon casts reinforcement magic to the summoned monsters.
I'd have been able to use powerful magic if only the prince could take care of the front.

"That's strange de~su. The blue and the red should have butted in with this much uproar."

This centipede is strong. My sword can't cut it well. If only Hayato and those girls come at this time.

"Ahaha~ Onee-san, you're having a hard figh~t."
"Don't look away, let's go help the prince."

Leilas-dono of the Shiga Eight Sword, and the holy knight boy head toward the prince to assist him. The boy cuts one foot of the centipede as a parting gift.
I defeat the centipede with three consecutive explosions when its attention

has turned away. The chanting was long, but since Explosion has Stun and Knockback effect, I was somehow able to do it.

Leilas-dono blocks the yellow-skinned demon's Inferno by using a great shield. He's amazing. He was probably using magic too, but I didn't think that there was anyone who could withstand that much attack beside Hayato.

"Hou? That's a nostalgic shield. How about this then?"

The demon throws white flame that easily pierced through the great shield of Leilas-dono in high speed.

I cannot let him die. The front will collapse if he dies.
I choose one option from among my selfish thought.

"O great Parion, please grant my selfish wish to summon the hero! I am the follower, follower of the hero Hayato, Ringrande."

It is not a chant.
It's a prayer for the god Parion. I don't know how much of my life span decreases with this prayer, but I'll give 10, or 20 years of it than letting my hometown gets violated.
The talisman of divine gift on my chest is shining in respond to my prayer.

Now, come, Jules Verne.

Carrying the hero, to the battlefield!

8-17. The Day of the Final (3)

<AN: This is from the hero's POV, a bit before lady Ringrande's POV chapter.>

"Hey, hey, Hayato. Where do you think the demon lord will appear?"
"Dunno, don't ask me difficult things. To quickly go to where the demon lord appears and defeat it. That's my job."
<TLN: Hayato refers to himself with ore-sama. A particularly pompous way to do so.>

Tsk, Maryest, she can't not know me.

"Ahaha, that's really like hero-sama."
"Can't be helped right. Seems that it's first time the oracle is all over the place."

Rusus the cat ears, and Fifi the dog ears carefree-ly said so.
I know, you girls are on my sides. I touch the ears of the two who bend themselves toward the captain' seat I'm sitting on. It feels really great. We've been together for five years, but it's taken me three years before they let me touch it.

"If I have to reasonably guess the place, it's probably around the labyrinth city, Selbira of Shiga kingdom, or the revived labyrinth of Kubooku kingdom."

The priest, Loreiya, calmly tells her prediction. Since the secretary, Nono, and the magic warrior, Ringrande aren't here right now, I can only really talk with the witch, Meryest, and Loreiya.

Loreiya is hugging my head from behind. Her breasts on my head are heavy. I off-handedly push the breasts aside. Loreiya looks so happy even though I did it in cold-heart.

Breasts are just nothing more than lumps of fat. I don't understand perverts.

"Hero-sama is also stoic today eh."

That doesn't sound like a line from a clergywoman.

Ah, why do my party have nothing but jigglyjiggle.
Isn't it fine to have one little girl at least. There's a taciturn girl, but she's 23 this year on top of having E cup. If there's a taciturn little girl, I'll whisper love to her anytime.

Haa, the girl with middle-schooler-level flat chest who seemed to be a soldier of Shiga kindgom that we saved recently was quite good. If we had just met five years earlier, I'd have absolutely proposed her.

"Hayato, the regular contact from Nono in Selbira has turned up, 『Peaceful and Dull』 she says."
"Is that so."

Meryest and Loreiya have predicted that Selbira is the most suspicious. Even though Nono are with escorts, it might be dangerous to leave a non-combatant like her there.

"Will someone change place with Nono to Selbira?"
"Eh~, I don't wanna. I want to be near Hayato."
"Right~ we'll fight better if Hayato is near right."

Stress will likely pile up if you're in the labyrinth city without being able to go into the labyrinth, Rusus and Fifi will likely snap and assault the labyrinth.

Half an hour later, the regular contact come from Seina who has infiltrated into Yowok kingdom.

"I'll read it loud. 『The poor small country is also peaceful today. I'm bored~』."

It looks like she wants to change place too like Nono, but the only one who can do infiltration among our members is only Seina the spy. Let her endure it.

Personally, I want the emergence to be in Yowok kingdom. That kingdom has done a great crime of sacrificing my honey for reviving the labyrinth after all.
<TLN: He said my honey in english.>
Not noticing the downfall of Kubooku kingdom since I kept diving into the hero labyrinth is a bitter mistake.

◇

"Isn't there a regular contact from Rin?"

It's not like that punctual Ringrande.
The underground labyrinth on Oyugock city should be inactive, so the demon lord can't possibly appear there. There must be something wrong with the oracle, but since it's the birthplace of Ringrande, and there's a wedding of her little brother going on, it's just right for her to have gone there.

"Hayato is really forgetful~"
"True. So, what does he forget?"
"The regular contact time is changed to afternoon since Rin has some business isn't it."

Tsk, Rusus and Fifi, you're just as forgetful.
Right huh, she complained about fighting against the stupid prince of Shiga kingdom on the regular contact yesterday.

Right at that time.

The Control Orb in front of the captain's seat is flickering intensely.
It seems that someone has used the Talisman of Divine Gift. No, looking at the situation, it's Ringrande, no mistake 'bout it.

"Everyone, take your position."
"Mary, who's used the talisman."
"Wait a bit--it's Ringrande."

As expected huh.

"I'll wait at the bow. I'll leave the steering to Wyni."
"Leave it to me."

I shoulder Arondight and rush to the bow.

◇

Coming out of the dark grey space, the ship appears in the original world.

Alright, let's say the usual line.

"The great me, has arrived!"

Umu, it feels good.

The monsters flying in the air are coming to attack the Jules Verne after taking my provocation.
Maryest reports with the speaking tube.

『Ringrande is safe. The enemy is--』

Meryest is hesitating.
You don't have to say it, I didn't think that that guy is here.

The one over there is the fated opponent.
I met it three years after I had been summoned as a hero. Our party that I thought to be invincible was utterly defeated by this yellow demon. If my companions didn't sacrifice themselves, I might have been killed by this demon.

However, I'm not the same as back then.
I'll show you directly.

I will not hesitate, I'll use my full power from the start.

Activating my unique skills, [Strongest Lance (Nothing cannot be Penetrated)], and [Invincible Shield (Nothing can Penetrate)], and lastly, [Infinite Regeneration (Endless Healing)]. I can only use Infinite Regeneration once in a month, so I've been reserving it for fighting the demon lord, but I'll lose if I hesitate here against that guy.

I'll leave the small fries to my companions, and devote myself to fight the yellow bastard.

My companions go down from the ship and the ship submerges into the dimensional gap with auto pilot. We can't lose the precious ship here after all.

"Fall back, you dog of Saga empire!"

What? The stupid prince huh?
Looks like he can use the holy sword of Shiga kingdom, but you'll make it cry y'know. It's pitiful for the holy sword if you use it like that. Looks like he can at least use holy verse, but he can't pull out the holy sword's power.

I'll have you witness, the guy who can truly use the holy sword!

"<<SING>> Arondight!"

The blue light of the holy sword is more intense than ever.
I activate Flying Boot and plunge to the yellow demon.

Today, Arondight is somewhat different!

8-18. The Day of the Final (4)

<AN: Continuation of Hayato's POV>

I wonder how many times we've exchanged blows with sword.

To be matched by the yellow demon that's supposed to be the magic type, my confidence is shaken y'know. I don't know what kind of magic the demon use, but it's using magic edge on its elongated nails, it's troublesome. To grow back again no matter how many times I've broken it is too much of cheating.

When I look with appraisal, the difference between my level and the yellow bastard is only a little.
Yet, why can't it reach.

I block the yellow bastard's flame attack with [Invincible Shield], and penetrate its barrier with the [Strongest Lance]-powered Arondight. However, the power is getting shaved by scaly barrier that appear around the demon.
Whenever I damage the demon even a little, the three orbs that are floating around it heal the demon immediately. I've tried destroying the orbs earlier, but the demon summons another one whenever I break one.

I'll be gradually pushed back if this continues.

"Hayato, please don't fight alone, we're a team you know."

Dang, I've gotten too heated.
Maryest is right, if we cooperate there's no way we can lose even against a strong enemy.

Fortunately, most small fries on the opposite of the arena seem to have been eliminated by the warriors of Shiga kingdom. I didn't know since I rarely went to Shiga kingdom, but the warriors of this kingdom can't be made light of. The monsters had been separated away from the yellow demon along with the buff before I knew it, since they weren't approaching

each other, a considerable distance had opened.

It's as if someone is adjusting it.

I've thought such thing unintentionally.
Ridiculous. Even if they're small fries, those monsters are of upper level 40. If there's someone that has strength to do such thing, I'd scout that person into our party.

The two monsters near us are also being dealt with by my companions. Rusus and Fifi are in charge of the centipede. It seems to be a hard fight, but it'll be over since Ringrande has come to assist them.
The two-horned rhinoceros beetle is flying around, but Wiyaryi is restraining it as to not get close.

"Wiy, I'm leaving that monster to you. Rusus and Fifi will help you soon, so please stall for some time."
"I understand Hayato. Please leave it to me."

No, Wiyaryi, I wanted you to reply that you could defeat it. Why doesn't she understand even though she's an archer.

"Is the strategy briefing over alreadyes?"

I was wondering why it didn't attack...
I'll make you regret that composure.

"Hayato, please buy us some time for the spell."
"Understood!"

Before I can attack with Arondight, the yellow bastard attacks with flame. I block the white flame with the holy shield strengthened with Invincible Shield. I couldn't block them all, but Loreiya can always heal some minor wounds.

"As expected, really as expected deesu. To defend against <<White Inferno>>, you've improved desu. Hero is interesting after all desu."

Rusus and Fifi are helping Wiyaryi after defeating the small fry.

"Ringrande, Loreiya, we're starting the chanting."

The three girls use Talisman of Divine Gift to start the forbidden spell chanting.
The talisman has many convenient functions, by synchronizing chanting, the power and precision of tactical magic can drastically jump.

Mary intends to defeat the recovery orbs all at once huh.
However, if you use the tactical magic of forbidden spell here, it'll leave a scar that can't be ignored in this city.

"This is strange desune. Why isn't the blue and the red coming desuka?"

The yellow bastard looks puzzled.
I block the attack of the slightly absent-minded demon with my shied. I feel that this is my chance, but I can't leave the back now.

"Well, it's fine desu. The damages from hero and the others feel good, but it's about time to let the hero have the taste of fear and despair desune."

"Fuhn, you M bastard! Making me feel fear you said? Try if you can do it!"
"Well then, please accept the souvenirs desu. Please taste it to your heart's content desu."

In order to anticipate the demon's attack, I gulp down the acceleration potion. I have nothing more once I use this, but I've got a really bad feeling. I drink the bitter liquid. The effect comes out little by little, the movement of the surrounding gradually becomes slower.

A gigantic summoning circle appear high in the sky behind the yellow bastard.
You think I'll let you do it easily!

"<<SING>> Arondight, <<PLAY>> Tunas."
<TLN: Play as in playing musical instrument, especially string's.>

I recite the holy verses of the holy sword and the holy armor.

Rousing my mana, magic power (Energy) is being produced as if overflowing from the core of the holy armor, the philosopher's stone. And then, that vast power flows into the holy sword.

The preparation is complete before the yellow's bastard finishes with the summoning circle.

"<<Shining Blade>>"

Finishing move should be shouted after all.
Swinging Arondight with subsonic speed, I turn the blade of light toward the summoning circle.

Shiing.

Tsk, that bastard threw one of the healing orb up in the sky and warded off Shining Blade.
I swing the remaining Shining Blade, but this time the demon uses the monster's corpses below to intercept it.

The fight was futile, and the summoning had been completed.

"What..the heck."

A whale is flying in the sky.
It's a gigantic monster bigger than 300 meters in length.

"G, great monstrous fish?!"
"Lies, the one that the golden wild boar king used, that?"
"The legendary aerial fortress isn't it?"

The three people who've stopped the chanting let out voices of shocks.
The great monstrous fish, despite the somewhat silly name, it's a level 97 monster.

I couldn't believe it and rechecked many times.

However, there's no mistake about it.

"We can't withdraw no matter what the opponent is. Wiy, Rusus, Fifi, call the Jules Verne back to the surface, I'll permit you to use this as the main battery. Take Arondight, and go."

We've hidden the precious dimensional submerging warship to protect it from harm, but it seems that's not to be. I'm sorry to the emperor, but it doesn't seem like I can keep my promise of taking the warship back safely.

If we use the ship's main battery in the downtown, it'll certainly become catastrophic.
The hero's name will probably be ruined, but there is no other way to defeat that monster. I hand over Arondight that will become the core of the main battery. I take a spare magic sword from the infinite stowing (Inventory) in its place.

"That's some nice fear node~su."

Damn you yellow bastard.
You'll only keep that conceit for so long. The time when Rin and the others finish their chanting will be your last.

I wonder what the great monstrous fish is thinking, instead of looking here, it's staring hard at one corner of the arena. I don't really understand, but this is favorable. That yellow bastard might have unexpectedly failed the summoning, and could not control it.

"However, the hope mixed with the bitter taste of fear, quite satisfactory desune."

Hope huh. It's fine to think about pleasant things right?

I, after this fight is over, will go visit the orphanage. I absolutely won't die until I get to the paradise of little girls. Taking a bath together, sharing a bed together, the dream spreads.

"As long as the great me is a hero, hope always exist y'know."
"Laughable desune."

I didn't notice it.

The summoning circle that has summoned the great monstrous fish remains in the sky.

That's right, I shouldn't have not noticed the meaning of it.

From the summoning circle that hasn't disappeared even after the summoning is over, great monstrous fish begins appearing one after another.
Including the first one, there are seven of them.

I see, you guys are my death huh.

Hey, Parion-san.

Your world is too hard y'know.

8-19. The Battle in the Arena

Satou's here. It seems that they served whale meat for the school lunch a long time ago. I had eaten the meat of the whale that was stranded ashore on the coast when I was visiting my grandfather's house, it was really delicious.
Although that's something from a long ago, so it might've been glorified.

◇

In the end, I lost the timing to attack when I was hesitating.
For the time being, I guess I should ensure that no one dies.

I move from the spire to the audience seating on the arena.

The duke and the king body-double--are still having a hard time.

Alright, let's use that here.

There's this [Magic Hand] among the magic I've acquired recently. A nature magic user who has become able to use intermediate level magic is sure to acquire this magic.
It's probably easier to understand if I say that the effect is close to the so-called psychokinesis. It seems magicians use this magic to reach place where their hands can't, scratch their back, or rub their own shoulders.
Unskilled magicians can only exert the same level of power as theirs with this [Magic Hand], so there's rarely any magician who use this in a fight.
Following the mastery of Nature magic skill, the number of hands I can deploy at the same time with [Magic Hand] have also increased just like with magic arrow. Similarly, if someone who excels in mana manipulation uses [Magic Hand], it can reaches quite far. In my case, I can extend 120 hands to around 500 meters each.
It seems that even among the magicians in the world, one that can skillfully use more than two hands is quite rare.

Innumerable [Magic Hands] smoothly extend; it seize three monsters who block the way of the duke and his companions, and throw them away to the arena.

The handling is a tiny bit difficult.
Before long, I get the [Magic Hands] to hold swords, and fight like a thousand-armed Kannon (Senju Kannon).

The duke's escorts are surprised to see the monsters suddenly removed, but it seems they prioritize getting the duke escapes rather than investigating the cause. There are some people looking for the person who have removed the monsters, but no one notices me. Apparently, this is thanks to the skills I've learned during the infiltration mission before.

◇

Now then, it seems that the people who can't fight monsters have finished evacuating.
Of course, I didn't only watch the evacuation as it happened. I was doing work of catching people who got left behind with [Magic Hand], and throwing them to the escape passage.

The monsters near the hero's party and the yellow-skinned demon are a pain. Thanks to the provocation the hero has done in the beginning, the monsters always go back to him no matter how many times I've thrown them away.
I decide to leave two monsters who are particularly stubborn to the hero's party. That tiger ears person, and that wolf ears person will probably defeat them.

There are six monsters remaining.
It'd be nice if the prince and his cohorts help to exterminate the monsters, but for some reason, they're going towards the yellow-skinned demon, so the number of monsters aren't decreasing. Such inefficient people.

The Eight Shiga Sword man has left the battle, maybe because the damage he's incurred from the yellow-skinned demon in the beginning is big. Really,

how cowardly.
The battle-maniac boy was fighting amusingly against the yellow-skinned demon, but he has fainted after receiving an attack from the demon's tail. The stomach portion of his armor is dented, but looking at his HP, it doesn't seem to be a wound that'll kill him, so it's probably fine to leave him alone. Looking at his position, it doesn't seem like he'll get caught up in a ranged attack anyway.

◇

"Yasaku, be more prudent with big moves. We don't know if the other people will fall apart. Preserve your stamina."
"Baro, you're just too rigid. It's time to decrease their number with a bang now."
"Hey wait, Yasaku, and Tan, save the chattering for later."
"That's right, if you don't keep your guard up, it'll be dangerous."

The party fighting the War Mantis seems to be fine. A heavy warrior, a magic warrior, a magician, and a priest carrying a pole arm, it's a party with good balance.

Of course, there aren't only party like that around.

"Sir Hoen, I will take care of this, so please stand back."
"What's this, Sir Muzuki, I won't let you be the only one who does great deeds here!"

The knights are compromising to each other in front of a pill bug-type monster.
These two are of lower level 20s, but since their knight retainers are high leveled, they'd be fine.

I wonder if it's okay to take that out here?

No-one-is-looking right?

I use [Stalagmite (Toss Stone)] in secret.

It's an elementary level earth magic, but since it hits the (monster's) weak abdomen from below, it pierces through it, quite helpful. Even though the pill bug is left hanging in the air by the stone lance on its abdomen, it's still alive. The monster's remaining HP is only around 20%. As for the rest, the knights can just rush in and attack from position where they can't be counterattacked, and it's history. Even though they were having a concession earlier, what a calculated bunch.

The next party seems to be a mish-mash.

Even though there are two shield users, they don't seem able to use provocation skill. As the result, the monster aims for the attacker, and the rear guards devote themselves to heal the attacker instead of casting attack magic.

"Kyaa"
"Sosona! Gerca, fix your posture. Don't let Sosona's sacrifice go to waste."

One member of the party got kicked by the cricket type monster and launched into the air. Still, sacrifice you said.... Isn't she still alive?

That's a girl of fairykin I guess?
She's been thrown up around 10 meters high into the air. She had probably protected against the attack with magic, but her HP is rapidly decreasing to below 10%. I catch her in the air with [Magic Hand], and pull her here. Along the way, I use [Magic Hand] to make her drink a not-for-sale potion.

I've made it somehow.
After her HP has recovered to around 90%, I lay down the girl on the audience seat. I've wanted to see her closer since it's the first time I've seen a Leprechaun.

[Magic Hand] is truly convenient. I'm afraid that it'd turn me into a degenerate.

I stealthily invoke 10 Remote Arrows, and snipe at the cricket's leg joints from behind.
They seem to be surprised with the sudden support fire, but with this, I can probably leave them unattended without problem.

This party seems to be the one struggling the most. Even though the other parties are struggling, they're fighting while staying alive. Sometimes they need help, so I absorb mana from the monster while I'm observing the hero's fight.

◇

That yellow-skinned demon seems to be a companion of the ojaru and nari demons from before after all. If I tell it that the demon lord has been defeated, I wonder if this demon will be docile for the next 66 years?

Nevertheless, the three orbs floating above the yellow-skinned demon sure are great. Even if the hero and his party dealt great damage to the demon, the orbs immediately recover it. I wonder if there's a way to summon the orb written in the demon summoning book from the other day? After checking it with my AR, it seems they're called Cure Orbs. I've searched for it, but there's nothing about it written in the demon summoning book. How unfortunate.

Oh?
The crisis perception is warning me to something high in the sky?

There's a summoning magic circle over there.
I don't know what will be summoned, but it's fine to just immediately get whatever POP out of it from here alright?

And then, the thing that comes out of it is--

A whale?

It's flying in the air, and about 300 meters big, but it's unmistakably a whale. I don't think even the blue whale grows this big though?

The monster's name seems to be Great Monstrous Fish.

Any Japanese who sees it for the first time must be saying, "A whale flying in the sky", it's just how the etymology goes.

The hero and his companions look surprised.

Of course they would be.
I mean, when it's that big, I can't imagine just how many meals you can make from it.

If I seriously make yamatoni from it, I wonder how many I could make?
<TLN: https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/大和煮, essentially beef boiled with soy sauce, ginger, and sugar.>

My eyes met with the great monstrous fish's eyes unintentionally.

Well hey, demon.
You can do it if you try after all!

I had almost danced in joy reflexively, but it wasn't only one.

There are another six of it coming out of the summoning circle, terrific.
I've waited more after that, but it seems to be the end. There may be more coming out, so I'll stop myself from destroying the magic circle.
<TLN: Sorry, it was 'including' not 'excluding' on the previous chapter, so there are 'only' 7 whales.>

◇

Now then, since I mustn't damage the meat when I demolish the whales, I decide to shave off their heads with Laser and put them into the storage immediately. I actually wanted to demonstrate Excalibur sharpness for it, but since they're too big, it just won't reach.

A single Laser shot is weak, so decide to use it together with Condense.

The power of a single laser shot is weak, but I've become able to shoot multiple shots after I've leveled up the skill level. When I unify them into one with Condense, the power and the convergence will be increased.

I simulate the Laser trajectory by using Space Grasp and Radar together.

The exposure time was going to be slightly insufficient, so I decide to shoot it like an ON/OFF consecutive pulse laser.
I can use the magic consecutively just fine, but it'll take some time, and I don't want them running back to the summoning circle.

Flash, and it smells as if a coffee is nearby from the ozone. The pulse laser strokes the whales on its track, and shoots out beyond the cloud.

Alright, cleared in one blow!

It'll be catastrophic if those gigantic masses fall down, so I promptly use Ground Shrink and Sky Drive together to get close to the whale meat that have began falling, and collect them into the Storage. The whale meat feel hot, I don't know whether because it's been roasted, or because the flesh and blood have evaporated.

It's fresh from the oven.
<TLN: Can also mean "Pleased with myself".>

Even though they've been burned with Laser, there are still a lot of body fluids splashed around. I've heard that blood won't come out from wounds burned by Laser, but I wonder if it's just a hearsay?

It seems that I'm the only one who's puzzling over such thing.
The Arena that had been wrapped in tumult until now has become quiet before I knew it.

Umm~, whales are delicious and all, but I think you shouldn't eat them.

>Title [Great Monstrous Fish Slayer] Acquired
>Title [Phantom Technique User] Acquired
>Title [Light Technique User] Acquired
>Title [Sky Chef] Acquired

8-20. The Battle in the Arena (2)

Satou's here. It's said that the three major desires of man are sleep, appetite, and sexual desire. That's why it can't be helped that I lost to the appetite and did something careless. However, I plan to do my best as to not lose to the sexual desire. Since it's said that lolicon is one of the seven big crimes.

◇

Oops.
Even though it's alright since I'm in Nanashi silver mask mode, I might've been a bit too conspicuous.

Now then, wonder how I should deceive them.

No, this might be a good opportunity. I've been doing something like strolling alone incognito in an MMO hunting ground since some time ago, so if I make it really showy here, it might help in making exposing my true identity harder since it'll be different than my usual self.

Fortunately, the blood from the whales have evaporated into mist, so they should haven't seen me.
There's probably no one that can use [Clairvoyance] like me. I've tested this with Arisa, I can sense if someone is using it to see me with mana perception.

For now, let's do something about my voice. "A, aa, a", I alter my voice to be higher.

>[Strange Voice Skill Acquired]

It has to be the most showy one, so I decide to use [White Mask, Halo options attached].
These clothes were made when I was thinking with Arisa late at night with

a strange tension, and went overboard. As for the garment, the clothes is white as the basic tone, and colored with gold threads. On top of having needlessly fluttering cloths in the style of miko, the shoulder, chest, and back areas are made to look gender-neutral.
I don't wear a mantle or an overcoat, and equip the usual white smile mask. The wig is the newly made one with long straight violet hair. It's not made from Arisa's hair of course. It's just a dyed white-hair wig.
I use illusion magic to add three shining halo options there that will make afterimages (blurs) when I move. As a bonus, I put bracelets on my ankles that are shining more intense as I move faster. I only need to put [<<Flexible Shield>>], and [<<Flexible Armor>>] and it's complete with this.
I leave the title into [Unsung Hero], matching the Nanashi name.
<TLN: The hero here is the 'Eiyuu' one, not the 'Yuusha' one.>

It's a showy gaudy style that I absolutely won't wear when I am Satou.

Since I'm going to intervene anyway, I turn serious, and use Remote Arrows to destroy the two remaining beetle monsters, and the yellow-skinned demon's orbs. I directed the remaining arrows toward the yellow-skinned demon itself, but it could defend against the arrows. Several magic arrows seem to have been burned by the fire magic of the yellow-skinned demon.
Using magic against magic is a good idea. I'll try it next time.

"Who's dhere?"
"Who are you!"

The yellow-skinned demon and the hero asked my identity in overlap.
While keeping distances to each other, both of them seem to be wary of me.
I lower my altitude and descend to approximately 10 meters above the ground.

"Nanashi."

I utter my name briefly.
Thanks to maxing out Strange Voice skill, I can freely use any voice I want. I adjust the voice while imagining how a voice actress perform as a boy like.
It's giving an impression of unknown age and gender.

The crisis perception warns me of the danger from the beautiful women

behind the hero. That reminds me, it's been 2-3 minutes since the chanting begins. It's probably some kind of advanced level magic, but judging from this sensation, it's probably not a magic that should be used inside a town.

Not good.
That, I have to stop that.

It's been awhile since I feel this impatient. I cheeks the log just to be sure, it doesn't seem to be from mind magic.
The best way is to persuade the hero to stop them, but the problem is that there won't be enough time to do it, so I'm going to be forceful.

First, I use [Break Magic] to forcefully stop the chanting.

Of course, disrupting magic that's being composed causes the mana from the source to begin overflowing on the surrounding. I've expected this course of events from the result of doing magic experiments during late nights, so I use [Force Barrier (Mana Section)] to protect the beautiful women. It shouldn't be that strong of a defense magic, but it seems to have protected them without any problem.
However, there seem to be feedbacks from the forced termination of the magic chanting to some extents, they fall to the grounds on their knees.

"What are you doing!"
"That magic is too dangerous you know. Sorry, but I've made them stop the chanting you know."
<TLN: He talked a bit like Arisa here.>

The hero rushes to the women while protesting to me, but I give him the explanation after the fact. I changed my tone a bit to match my voice.
After all, if you're a hero, I'd like you to mind the damage to the surrounding a bit more. Please follow the example of Wingman from the rebroadcast a long time ago.

"This is laughable desu. Are you quarreling among yourselves desuka?
You must have used illusion technique, and sent the great monstrous fish back to the summoning gate desune? Your friend has got quite some wisdom there desu."

Huh? You're going to interpret it like that eh.

◇

The hero's silver ship who seemed to have been hiding in the sub-space surfaced. White light emits from the bow of the surfaced ship.

It loiters for a while, but then after hesitating for a bit, it decides on the aim, and shoots a beam.

Unfortunately, it's aiming at me.

Apparently, they judged me as an enemy since they saw the hero was protesting to me. I curse at those simplistic people in my mind, but I do objectively look like a suspicious person after all, so I consent for a little. The mask probably doesn't inspire me as an ally of justice after all.

I stack <<Flexible Shields>> and block the beam from the hero's ship with it. The Flexible Shield's HP rapidly decreases. Looks like it has about 4-8 times the power of my Laser. Since I can't be blocking it forever, I use [Condense] magic to divert the beam's direction toward the sky. It might have been easier if I had [Absorb Light] of shadow magic.

The ship's bow that's discharging the beam has become red hot, so the attack is probably going to stop soon. The hero is shouting something to his companions in the ship, but it looks like they can't hear him.

"So weak hero! <<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais."

Huh? The prince's here.

After the hero's ship, even the prince judges me as an enemy, and shoots the flying holy sword. I shift my face to the side to avoid the sword, and just before it passes me, I catch the grip, stopping it. The holy sword is going wild in my grasp, but it quiets down immediately after I draw out the mana from it.

However, prince, you sure looks quite exhausted.

When I was putting the whales into my storage, there were large quantity of parasite looking monsters falling together with the body fluids, that I didn't put into the storage, toward the arena. They were individually weak monsters, but they were falling just right to where the prince and his cohorts were.
I thought that the prince and his cohorts would be fine so I left them alone, but it seems they unexpectedly had a hard time. His armor is partially destroyed, and there are countless scars that look like they've been eaten from monsters remaining on the bare skin. He's doing well, not dying from blood loss.
The battle maniac boy is in more horrible state than the prince, but he's stabbing the monster corpses while laughing loudly as if he's gone mad.

◇

The yellow-skinned demon creates a summoning circle below its feet like it's trying to get away, so I use [Break Magic] to destroy the summoning circle. Next, I destroy the yellow-skinned demon's defensive magic with [Break Magic], but it seems to be multi-layered, it hasn't completely come off with one shot.

I quickly approach with Ground Shrink, and use [Mana Drain] on the yellow-skinned demon to snatch its mana away.

"Gununu! To have my mana easily stolen to this degree!"

The yellow-skinned demon isn't also letting its mana get stolen freely, it's doing various useless resistances.

"You bastard, you must be the true ancestor of the vampires desune."

This time I'm treated as a vampire huh.

For the time being, I continue to use the combo of hitting it with [Break Magic], followed by [Mana Drain]. The demon is saying something, but I

noncommittally ignore it.
I can snatch 300 MP with one go. I've thought that it only has 710MP since it's level 71, but it doesn't seem like it's been emptied even after I've deprived it thrice. Apparently, demons have far larger MP pool than human. Its mana finally dried up after I snatch it 10 times. Doesn't it have more MP than me?

The snatched mana is too redundant, so I charge it into the holy sword that I've just got. At first the sword is the size of a one-handed sword, but it's growing bigger as I put more mana. If Arisa was here, she would have a weird idea while grinning with loose cheeks, no doubt bout it. The expansion stopped after I put around 500 MP. It's become as big as the replica in the museum.

After I've finished tearing off the yellow-skinned demon magic defense, stripped it off its magic power, and shaved 90% of its HP, I throw the demon toward the hero's party.

The hero's sword bisects the yellow-skinned demon that's come into his view without any hesitation. So it can be easily defeated when its defense magic has been broken after all. If I develop a magic that can break multiple magic at once, I can defeat them easily it seems. The yellow-skinned demon was saying, "I demand a restart noDESu", but what exactly did it want to restart was unknown until the end.

The magicians in his party are burning the remains with magic.

The hero steps before me. He still has his sword drawn. Come to think of it, he's not using a holy sword, but a magic sword. Did the holy sword break?

"What is your intention."
"Wasn't it your fated opponent?"
"Fuhn, I won't say thanks."
"I don't mind you know. You'd have defeated it if you had used the forbidden magic right?"

Judging from the yellow-skinned demon's composure, it probably had countermeasures for it, but it'd be boorish of me to retort with that. However, this tone is a mistake. It's hard to talk.

"By the way, that stupid prince is going to die, you're not going to help him?"

I turn my view toward the prince from the hero's words, he's being toyed with by small fry monsters after seemingly getting inflicted by intoxicant poison. Looks like he's fighting with a dagger.

It seems that the hero doesn't want to actively help him.

I'm also fine with leaving him alone, but I have to eliminate the monsters anyway, so I decide to help him on the occasion.
It'd be faster if I use remote arrows, but let's try using the holy sword that I've just acquired.

"<<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais."

The holy sword Claiomh Solais leaves my hand, and multiplies itself like papers scattering away from a paper stack. It's split into 13 swords with thin blades. The true sword is wrapped in blue light on the exterior.
Aim marks like with [Remote Arrow] are displayed in my AR. I can also set the trajectory in similar fashion it seems. I shoot them at the small fry monsters just like that.

The blade cuts the monsters in successions as they evaporate by the holy light.
They were all around level 20 monsters when I first saw them, but there are some level 50 monsters mixed in before I knew it. It looks like they used skill called [Life Drain] to steal levels from the other monsters and the prince, and then grew up.

I see.

That explains why the prince's hair has become white somehow.

He also didn't have that many wrinkles, and his level should have been in upper 40s, yet it has been dropped to upper 20s now. The battle maniac boy is also like the prince, but he's in considerably better condition than the prince. His level is still in upper 30, and his hair hasn't aged to become

white either.

Alas, it would have been better if I had waited to throw Claiomh Solais for a bit longer.
It should have been good enough for them to survive with their five limbs intact.

8-21. The Battle in the Arena (3)

Satou's here. There's this thing called Tabletop RPG. It's a game where you're role-playing as someone in the game's world, but unlike Westerners, Japanese people are generally shy, so in most matches, they talk in business-like manners the whole time.
I'll say this again, there are a lot of shy people among Japanese.

◇

A birdkin scout comes flying from the opposite side of the arena.

Apparently, the duke forces have finally arrived. Confirming on the map, there are 10 iron golems, and 3000 knights encircling the arena. There are also several mobile forts.

"Tsk, coming here after all this."

I'm saying my farewell to the hero who's uttering cursing words. It'll be troublesome if I don't leave soon.

"Hero, I will have to go soon. I don't want to get too close to influential people."
<TLN: He's using boku to refer himself here, mostly used by polite males, but can and is rarely used by females too.>

I'm sorry, I'm actually already on the side of those influential people.

"I understand that feel. You can probably see it already, but I'm Hayato Masaki. It may be confusing, but Masaki is the family name. You're also a Japanese--no, with that hair, a reincarnated person huh. You're a former Japanese right?"
"Japanese or not, you already know from seeing me don't you? I'm the [Hero without Name], Nanashi. We might meet again in a battlefield someday."

<TLN: Alright, the unsung hero thing isn't going well with how Satou's using the title for lol. It can still mean either way though.>

Do I regard myself a hero--nope~ it's embarrassing enough that I feel like rolling on the floor. It's like installing chuuni language converter tool in a smartphone.

I'm really glad that I have the poker face skill.

"Wait! Won't you fight with me together? I want you for the battle with the demon lord."

Gross.
At least, please say, "I want your power" instead. Being a homo on top of lolicon is unreasonable.

"Is that a proposal? Thanks for the invitation, but no thanks. The sca~ry onee-sama bunch behind you are glaring after all. Bye then, ladykiller-san."

What the heck is with [Ladykiller-san]!Someone please stop me. I wonder if it's because I'm aware of my gender-neutral speech, I have become a strange character.
I've cleared the objective of becoming a character that won't be associated with me (Satou), but it's too gross, I'm dying.

◇

The scout unit that have raided the audience seating begin to call out [Yamato] when they see me.

What?

After I look at myself, I understand.

13 Claiomh Solais splits are floating around me like options from old shooting games, or bits.
They probably see it like the picture of Yamato in the museum.

However, wasn't Yamato a big man who wielded a two meters long great sword?
As expected, the current gender-neutral look of me can't possibly be likened with him I think. No, when I think again, the soldiers are pretty far away from me, so they probably can't measure my height.

Now then, let's heal the prince's and his cohort's wounds before leaving the stage. If I leave them alone to die here, it'll be like MPK, leaving me with a bad aftertaste.
Since it's troublesome to take the prince and his cohorts buried in the wreckages of the monsters, I put the wreckages into my storage, and then heal them who are left on the ground with water magic. I intended to only heal them for a bit, but they got completely recovered instead. I wasn't able to heal his white hair and aging, but I don't have any interest to help him that far. Have the temple look for it later yourself.
Looks like their destroyed equipments have been stored inside the storage along with the monsters remains, they're half-naked. I feel that it's pointless, so I put mantles I've got from thieves back then on top of their bodies.

"See you later, hero."
"Ah, let's meet again in the battlefield with the demon lord next time!"

Oops, I forgot to tell him that I've already defeated the demon lord. There's going to be an oracle from the god before long anyway, so I guess it's fine.

I climb several hundreds meters high with Sky Drive, and fly away beyond the sky with the Wind Magic: Air Cannon. When I tried it back then, the speed exceeded 100 Km/H. Let's try to see the maximum speed soon.

To disappear beyond the sky like this, I feel like a hero from Showa era.
<TLN: This time he's saying Hero in English. In this context, he means the superhero in TV kind, and probably Ultraman in particular.>

◇

When I'm up in the sky on top of the duchy capital, I confirm that Arisa and the others have properly evacuated into the basement of the mansion. Sera seems to have been safely rescued too, she's in the same room with Arisa and the others. Looks like the previous earl couple and the employees are all safe too.
I'm glad that lady Karina, and little brother-kun are also safe in the scroll workshop.

I land in a suitable-looking forest.

It looks like I'm being watched by monitoring magic, though I don't know if it's from the hero's companion, or the duke's subordinate. Once I had landed in the dense forest, I used [Break Magic] on myself, and the monitoring goft canceled.
I thought that it'd be troublesome if the sky drive got canceled, so I made a landing, but it seems that break magic only affects the designated target magic.

I go back to the duchy capital while flying close to the top of the forest. When I get close enough to see the capital, I descend to the ground and continue moving.

I infiltrate the duke castle by using the route I've used to sneak into the duke's third son room before. According to the map, it seems that the duke and the king's body-double are in the same room.

Looks like the hero, followed by lady Ringrande, and the imperial princess Maryest, are coming to the castle to have an audience with them. Since I can't find the other hero's companions and his ship, they've probably gone back to the sub-space.

"Please forgive me for the sudden visit."

I've entered the room brazenly, but it seems none of the guards notice me until after I've opened my mouth. Are these guards alright?

The guards are coming from the roof by breaking through it, and from the hidden room.
It's troublesome to deal with them, so I use [Magic Hand] to make them

unable to come closer.

"Who are you."
"I'm called Nanashi."

I answer the duke-san question. Duke-san instructs the guards with gesture, and they go back to their hiding places. The head miko-san might have told him about me, but to be in the same room as a suspicious person without guards like this, quite a daring person.
Only the duke's butler remains. If this was a manga, he'd be a dexterous type, but this butler seems to be of domestic affair type.

"I'll listen to your business."
"It's nothing much. I've come here to return this."

I unwrap the cloth while saying so, and hand over the holy sword Claiomh Solais.
Since they asked me how I got it, I told them the course of events honestly. For some reason, they were surprised when I talked about how the holy sword split into 13 when I recited the holy verse.

"This is too abrupt, I cannot believe you."
"There have been several people who can make the sword 『Dance』 by reciting the holy verse, but there were none who could release the true form of the holy sword."

They asked me to demonstrate if I really could do it, but isn't it bad to draw a sword before the king, regardless if he's a body-double?

"You don't need to worry. I've heard the story from the head miko. If the story about you defeating the demon lord is true, then you can kill us even without drawing a sword."

You're awful, duke-san. It is a fact, but you're going to shatter the guards' prides.

Since I've already transfered all the mana that I put into Claiomh Solais to other holy swords, I charge mana into it once again. It's fine with 500MP right.

Not only the duke, and the king, even the hiding guards are also surprised to see the holy sword growing.

"<<DANCE>>"

Just like before, Claiomh Solais splits into 13 swords and floats around my body.

"Ooh, the legend is true after all!"
"Beautiful, that painting truly wasn't an imaginary work."

They're too surprised.
The body-double-san even looks like he's going to go into spasm anytime, scary. Even getting excited should be done in moderation, okay.

Since it looks like they've admired enough, I release the excited state of the sword, and transition it back into one sword. I retrieve the MP that I've put into the sword, wrap it with a cloth and pass it to the body-double-san.

"You can keep holding it."
"Is it fine to do so without getting permission from the royal capital?"

Hey now, body-double-san, you shouldn't say thing like that without getting permission from the real king alright. I vaguely ask if it's alright to do it without the permission from the real king. The duke also nods when I glance at him.

"It is the spirit of the ancestor king Yamato-sama."

I don't really understand, but maybe there's some kind of will left behind? It's a convenient sword, but it's not like I'm in trouble even without it. Let's make up something suitable as a reason to give it back.

"Don't you need it for the defense of the royal capital?"
"I don't mind, there is another holy sword in the royal capital."

Ah, that casted holy sword huh.
I've made swords with the same technique myself so I know, that sword is

weak even compared to Gjallarhorn. It could cope with lower demons, but it probably wouldn't be able to match upper demons.

I have swords already, so I want to refuse, but it seems that once the sword has decided on its master, it will go back to its master if anyone draws it out. Normally, the master is decided with a dedicated ceremony, but it seems the case this time is extremely unusual.

Looks like they really want personnels who can subjugate the demon lord, when I receive the holy sword and the mood becomes hard for me to refuse, the talks about service, peerage, and such comes out. Of course since I don't have any such intention, I gently refuse it. It's already quite enough. I got interested when there was a talk of marrying the princess, but when I heard that she was a nine years old princess who hadn't got a fiance, that interest disappeared. Tell that to Hayato instead.

Since I feel bad for taking the holy sword for free, I decide to trade it with the famous holy sword in Shiga kingdom.

"T, this is, the holy sword Gjallarhorn that was stolen by the demonic man 17 years ago!"
"Ooh! God! The holy sword tempered by the ancestor king Yamato-sama has returned once again to the Shiga kingdom!"

I didn't think that they would be this delighted. It might have been better if I returned it earlier. By demonic man it must be Zen huh.

Since the hero and his party have arrived in the castle, I decide to bid my farewell.

The arena is ruined, so the final is postponed for one month, but a banquet ceremony is going to be held under the pretext of 'Upper Demon Subjugation'. It seems they've decided that the great monstrous fish were just illusions that the demon used.

Late night at that day, I make a casted holy sword the size of one-handed sword modeled after Claiomh Solais in one section of the underground labyrinth. The Claiomh Solais' sheath is among the garbages that I've put into the storage, so I reproduce it with the exact same look.

>[Counterfeit Skill Acquired]

>Title [Holy Swords Blacksmith] Acquired
>Title [Counterfeit Specialist] Acquired

At dawn, I sneak to body-double-san's bedroom and leave the replica on the bedside.
I put a note that says, "I've prepared the replica, please use it as you see fit.", together with the replica. With this, even the nitpicking nobles of pedigree can probably be effectively deceived. If the kingdom protector holy sword went missing, they would find someone to blame even if the duke and the king had given their permissions.

However, I'd have preferred a beautiful woman's bedroom if I had to sneak in anyway.

8-22. The Hero and Satou

Satou's here. People have different sense of values, but the saying, "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence." exist in any country. Of course, even in the parallel world.

◇

"Hou? 『Tempura』 huh."

That's the first word from the hero who comes to the banquet while taking along a lot of beautiful women. Looks like he deliberately used Japanese language for the tempura part.

"No, this is a dish called tempura. It's a secret specialties of the people in the know from the northern part of the dukedom."
"Hey, Sato."
"It is an honor to have my name remembered by hero-sama, but my name extends on the end, so please call me Satou."
"That so, sorry then. Satou."
"No, no, please do not mind it."

I don't mind if the hero finds out that I'm a Japanese when I'm as Satou, but it'll be troubling if it gets exposed with all observing eyes here.

The hero receives the tempura that Lulu presents on the plate.

"This is, I'm surprised. I've gotten used with beautiful women around me, but this is the first time I've seen a girl as beautiful as you. Wish I met her five years earlier."

As expected, even the hero was tactful enough not to say the "Five years earlier" part out loud. I didn't think that I got to read it with lip-reading skill.

Lulu's face is turning pale as if she's been insulted with an indirect sarcasm in public. It seems the hero gets secretly scolded by lady Ringrande. The two people beside the hero are smiling, but their eyes aren't.

I pat Lulu's head lightly, and ask her go to the kitchen to get some ingredients.
I'll follow up properly later.

The hero hardens when he sees Arisa who comes as the substitute.

"My honey!"
"Oh my, hero Hayato-sama, it has been a while."

Arisa who understands TPO talks in prim and proper manner. Still, honey he said.
Lady Ringrande, and the imperial princess Maryest confirm with each other that they don't know Arisa in low voices. The other hero's party members don't seem like they're interested with the hero's love life, they're busy eating the tempura and the aspic jellies. Aren't they the hero's harem?

"I'm really happy that you're alive, princess Arisa."

Noises like, "Princess?", or "Who is that maid talking with hero-sama?", are coming from the outfield.

"I thought you had died after getting rolled up in the political strife--"

The hero approaches Arisa while looking very happy, but then his expression freezes.

Ah, I have a bad feeling about this.

We move for a bit, and now there's a table between me and the hero.

"Oy, Satou! Have you forgotten the spirit of YES lolita, NO touch!"

So he really saw Arisa's title, [Satou's Slave]. Even so, I'm not interested in the young ones enough to be needing such spirit.

"Hero-sama, what exactly are you talking about?"
"That's right, Satou-sama was the one who saved me from predicaments. The reason why I'm a slave is because I've been put on Geass magic during the Yowok kingdom invasion."

She whispered the matter about being a slave to the hero so only he could hear it.
The hero confirmed something to the imperial princess Maryest, and the priestess Loreiya-san, but both of them waved their heads. Even the hero's party cannot remove the Geass huh. Just how strong it is. Come to think of it, I also asked head miko-san about it through Sera, but she couldn't do it too after all.

In the end, I proved them that I hadn't touch Arisa to he extent of getting myself checked with Loreiya-san's Truth Judgment magic. From my standpoint, there was no need for me to be subjected with Truth Judgment magic, but since I didn't want to be misunderstood of being a lolicon, I accepted it.

"Is that so, you didn't touch her! Well well, I really want to drink some nice liquor with you."
"I'm afraid I cannot."

It seems like he'll talk about little girls all night long until I vomit.
There were some things we needed to talk about, but since I couldn't keep monopolizing the hero, we promised to meet again later, but there was no opportunity to talk with the hero again today.

The women who followed the prince back then were trying to butter the hero up, but lady Ringrande, and imperial princess Maryest overwhelmingly rejected them.

Girls of 12-13 years old were also talking to the hero, but he acted normally with them, maybe they were out of his strike zone.

◇

It was hard consoling Lulu the evening of that day. The fight with the demon lord might have been easier even.

"Lulu being cute is really the truth, the hero, Arisa, and me see Lulu as a beautiful girl."
"Thank you very much, I'm happy even if it's a lie master."

Even after I whispered sweet lines close to Lulu's ear, she only perceived it as consolation words.

When I told her that she could request her favorite dishes, she told me every kind of sweets that I had made until now. I'm very happy that she's reached the point where she can say something selfish.

Since it'll take too much time to make them, I take out the finished sweets I've put in the storage on the kitchen, and bring them to the dining room where Lulu is waiting.
I knew that Mia, Pochi, and Tama are waiting beside Lulu, so I had prepared the shares for four people. Of course, there's nothing for Arisa and me. Arisa has been taking excess calories lately, so she's presently forbidden from sweets. I don't need to do the diet, but I'm abstaining from indulgence food to accompany Arisa.

Today I've made a new cake to surprise Lulu. It's a custard pie made from a type of fruit which has the same name as Lulu.
This lulu fruit looks really unappetizing when it's unpeeled, it's a fruit of misfortune. In addition, when eaten raw, it's so sour, not something that should be eaten. However, when it's heated, it strangely turns into a peach-like fruit. From what I've heard from the person who's given me this fruit, they process it by pickling them, not heating.

"My new creation today is Lulu custard pie."

Lulu hesitated when she heard the name, but as if giving up, she cut a mouthful and put it into her mouth.

"It's delicious."

Large drops of tears are falling on Lulu's cheeks. Huh~? I didn't expect this

development.

"That sour fruit becomes this delicious."
"Moreover, the color looks beautiful right?"
"Yes, thank you very much. I understand what master is trying to say somehow."

That is good above all.
Lulu continues eating the pie on the large platter while crying.

I wipe the mouth of Mia who's watching that intensely with a handkerchief.
I take out the prepared pie from the Storage from under the table, and cut it for three people's shares.

"Delicious."
"Sweet~"
"One hundred points nanodesu!"
"Uuu, I have to keep dieting.... It's alright with just a mouthful, a mouthful..."

Arisa is saying that like a bad loser, no good. She's absolutely going to say 'just another one'.

That day, I slept together with Lulu, and whispered "Lulu, you're cute." until she went asleep. Since Pochi and the others played janken, I had a feeling that it had been decided there would be a daily special of whispering from tonight on.
Please drop that expectation, by all means.

>[Soothing Skill Acquired]

◇

The next day, I'm going to accompany lady Sera to the orphanage in the morning, and visit the barrier pillar workshop in the afternoon.

Although there's a missionary purpose for doing the consolation visit to the orphanage, it's still called consolation visit, so the main objective is healing

the children who are sicks with healing magic.

Our little girls are very popular here. Pochi and Arisa are particularly popular, strange plays, and learning cards are being spread around. I've warned Arisa to take care with the culture hazard for once, but it's all up to her for the self-restraint.

I'm not bringing Lulu and Nana today.
Since children don't hesitate to speak what they think, they will most likely say hurtful things to Lulu in barrage, so I leave her behind. The reason why I don't bring Nana is because she wants to take the young orga--children back home.

"Oh no! H, hero-sama is coming for consolation visit."
"Eeh! What should I do, maybe I should use some make-up."

The nursery workers, or rather, the onee-san staffs are getting excited.
Wait, aren't you all married.

When the hero Hayato comes, the boys and the onee-san staffs follow him around. Putting aside the children, I'm envious of him being pampered by not only the beautiful women, but also the soothing staff members. Furthermore, before I knew it, the director's daughter who's unusually unapproachable has followed him too.

Dang you good-looking guy, go explode.

"Chevalier-sama, chevalier-sama, look at this~"
"Uina has made one too, look at this."

I'm being surround by groups of 5-6 years old little girls. They've made shell accessories I've taught before. Although they're rough, each of them has characteristics of their own, interesting.

Even though the hero is surrounded by beautiful women, I'm stuck babysitting the children, I can feel the gap in society.

Since my eyes met with hero's, I greeted him. I couldn't get away from the little girls, so we were slightly apart. For some reason, he looked awfully

envious, I wonder why. It can't be, even if he's a lolicon, are these such young girls included on his targets? It can't be indeed.

About the trouble from lady Ringrande who saw me getting along with lady Sera during the consolation visit, since it's redundant, I'm omitting it.

◇

The visit to the barrier pillar workshop are only with my own companions that hasn't happened for awhile. The tour continues while I'm joining hands with Pochi and Tama. Barrier pillar seems to be a magic tool that's mainly for preventing monsters from invading villages. Its effect can reach 100 meters wide in radius with just one standing. However, since it's not a physical barrier, rampaging monsters, and monsters that are being chased by human can still pass over it, it seems.
The barrier pillar can function by absorbing mana from the earth vein, but since that'll wither the land, local spell-users supply the mana every few days instead.

The pillar is made of many magic cores, so there's some concern of thievery, but after it's erected on a land, it's casted with fixture magic, so it won't be easy to steal the pillar. Looks like even thieves who have attacked a village don't bother with the barrier pillar. It seems that the lord of the region will deploy their army for certain if anyone put their hands on the barrier pillar.

I wonder if the story is too difficult, Pochi and Tama have fallen asleep while holding both my hands, so I carry the two in corpse poses on both my arms, and continue the workshop tour. Liza offered to change for me, so I left the two to her along the way. They're cute when they're awake, but there are cuteness that are different than the usual when they're sleeping.

Peace is the best after all.

8-23. The Hero and Satou (2)

Satou's here. When I played fighting games, at first I was having fun with special attacks, but then I got gradually charmed with reading and creating combos.
Although as expected, I didn't think that the day where I would move like a fighting game character myself would come.

◇

"I'm coming for you, my honey!"

Hero Hayato opens the door and enters. Tama who's curling up on my lap is surprised and thrusts her claws on my lap. It's bit painful. Pochi, and Mia who are both on my sides harden.

Intruding the peaceful picture book reading time like this, what a troubling hero.

"What...the hell."

And, also, why are you in shock, hero Hayato.

Just what is he surprised about.

There's nothing particularly strange. Pochi had just pestered me to read her a picture book. I'm sitting down on a large sofa, and enjoying the afternoon in carefree after a long while. I'm wearing a refreshing tank-top and short-pants, but since this is a private room, there's nothing wrong about it.

Lulu, and Nana relaxing on the carpet below are wearing one piece that don't, although thin, expose their bodies. Liza was listening to me reading the picture book while calmly standing like meditating with her eyes closed. I can sense slight anger on her eyes. Liza unexpectedly likes to hear picture book reading after all. Is she angry because it's been disturbed?

Mia is scared of Hayato's eyes, she's slipping behind my chair, it's ticklish.

"Oh my, hero-sama, entering a room without even knocking like this, that's a bad manner you know?"

Even though Arisa is saying that in prim and proper manner, she's doing it while caressing my leg, it's a bit laughable. Geez, please stop with the sexual harassment while you're pretending to listen to the picture book.

"Let's fight Satou! You have angered me!"

The hero who screams with a face that looks as if it's crying blood gets pinned down by lady Ringrande and her group from behind.

Good grief, I don't understand what he's going on about.

◇

I change my clothes to easy-to-move knight clothes so as to keep me off from being impolite to princess Maryest, and go out. I don't intend to fight the hero in the least, but I cannot not go to where the hero and his companions are waiting.

"Are you really going to fight?"
"Of course not."

Lulu asked worryingly, I replied lightly.
Even if I fight, it'll only expose my true power, there's no advantage to it.

"You've come at last Satou!"

The hero who is being swarmed by big-breasted maid-san from the main building while shouldering Arondight is on the arbor of the courtyard.

"Let's have a fair fight!"
"I refuse."

The hero challenged me to a fight while pointing Arondight straight here, I flatly refused while smiling.
It seems the hero didn't expect that he'd be refused, he looked befuddled.
I'd like to ask him for an hour why he thought that I wouldn't refuse.

After all, even if we fight, there are only disadvantages for me right?

"Let's hear your reason."
"There's nothing for me to gain in the fight."
"Hee, you don't say that it's because you can't win huh."

The hero asked, and princess Maryest retorted.

"Of course, there's also the fact that there's no odds of me winning, but even if, by any chance, I win, there is no benefit for me. It's useless to fight right?"
"To cross swords with the hero, it's a very rare honor even in the empire you know?"

You really want me to fight the hero don't you?

"Please pass that honor to the knights, and people who fight in battle tournaments instead."
"You don't think that you will lose to Hayato either right?"
"Maryest-sama, that's an unreasonable thing to say. He's the hero-sama see? There is no way I can win against an existence that can match the demon lord."

I don't think I would definitely win against a veteran warrior in a straight swordsmanship fight, although it'd be a different story if it was an anything-goes fight. In fact, I had been ripped apart like getting checkmated in a chess match when I fought against elder Dohar, even if I was hiding my ability.

"Really? You're not harboring admiration, envy, jealousy, and also fear even when you're in front of an absolute strong. Am I wrong?"

I guess so.

"Oy Mary. Don't hinder my fight with difficult talks."

"Oh my, I'm sorry. This child's reaction is quite unusual, so I just inadvertently."

Now then, going back to the main problem, what should I do.

Come to think of it, Arisa sure is quiet.

"Gufufufu, 『Please don't fight for me』, what a delicious situation."

What are you saying in whisper.

"Alright, then let's do it like this. You're betting princess Arisa. As for me, I will grant you anything I can do."

Something big comes out.
Then, I'd like his ship.

"The dimensional warship, his holy sword, and his holy armor are the properties of the empire, so those are off-limits."

Princess Maryest firmly tells me as if she's read my mind. I've heard from baron Muno's long talk that the hero appears with a holy sword when he's summoned, I wonder if that's not true?

I can collect information as Nanashi, so I don't particularly need to do it as Satou. That's right, let's make him an insurance for the time where I alone am not sufficient. I can't cope if demon lords appear in two different locations at the same time after all.
Moreover, if I have some connection to Saga empire, I can take shelter there if I lose my place in Shiga kingdom.

◇

In the end, it's going to be with the hero and observers.

There were three conditions I gave him.

First, we're going to have the duel in a place where no one is watching.
Second, the hero is not going to use unique skills, or active battle skills.
Third, if Arisa's ownership is transferred to him, he has to give priority to Arisa's will when he's successfully released her from the geass.

However, since Maryest showed her disapproval, one person from each side was given permission to observe. Lady Ringrande wanted to come along too, but since various problems would arise if she saw the fight, she was prevented to.
I should have also followed the second condition by not using battle skills, but since Arisa insists that it's not fair, they let me use them.

The four of us have come to an abandoned arena under the duchy capital.
I know this place from an acquaintance who lives in the underground passages, it seems to be a place where dark martial art tournament was being held until 100 years ago.

Princess Maryest uses light magic to illuminate the room.
It's 10 meters high, and there are around 20 meters wide in radius. Since that also includes audience seats, the actual fighting location is smaller.

I asked Arisa about her true intention before we got here, and she said that I should deepen my friendship with the hero without going overboard, and exchange information. I felt that the distance between Arisa and the hero was quite enough already, but I wasn't moved even though I was entreated, yet when Arisa was being secretive like this, she would only get worse, so I accepted her reasoning.
<TLN: This is a jumbled mess even in the original raw, basically Satou doesn't believe that's all there is to Arisa's intention, but he's not going to press further since it'll only get worse if he does when she's like that.>

The [Don't go overboard] part is difficult since the opponent is the hero, but since it's not a serious fight, it'll probably be fine as long as I don't use weapons from my storage, don't hit him with intermediate magic, and don't use my bare hands to block his sword.

"Looks like it's fine to have a somewhat showy fight if it's here."

I've changed to white leather armor before we come here.

"I'll properly stop before hitting, so don't worry."
"Yes, I trust you."

Even though I replied out of courtesy, who would believe you when you have that carnivorous expression.

"Here-sama, this is not a serious battle you know. You lose if your opponent dies. I will go after Satou-sama if that happen."
"Umu, I'm good at holding back, leave it to me."

Arisa gives him a stern warning, but it's questionable if he really understands when he's fawning over her like that.

"There are three matches, winning two matches means victory."

Princess Maryest tells the victory condition.

"It's forbidden to lose on purpose alright!"
"But of course, my honey. Let's build a white house in the imperial capital when we get married. We'll keep a big dog at the garden."

Arisa was probably speaking to me, but Hayato who misunderstood had begun to talk about something. His taste is unexpectedly girlish.

"You really~ must not hold back okay! Please remember that, not only me, Lulu would also be gone!"

Arisa reminds me again in low voice.
I don't understand what kind of reasoning is that, but even if she doesn't mention Lulu, I don't have any intention of handing Arisa over. If Arisa truly wish for it, then I'll send her off with a smile, but if that's not the case, then she should be beside me.

"It's alright."

I nod to Arisa who looks really anxious. However, she's someone who doesn't have confidence in strange places.

◇

The hero is prohibited to use not only unique skills, but also active skills huh. I guess I should turn off the menu to make this fair. Even if I turn OFF the menu, the last setting of companion column seems to be kept anyway, alright then.

I turn OFF the menu after a long while.

The view is wide.

I'm with the fairy sword, Hayato's with a holy sword. I want to tell the hero to restrain himself, but he replies back saying that it's easier to stop before hitting with a sword that he's used to, I don't answer back.

"On your positions, the match begins when this coin touches the ground!"

Arisa flips a coin above.

I've learned various things after the fight with the demon lord.

The eyes movements.

The position of the center of gravity of the body.

The slight change in silhouettes reflecting from the movement of muscles.

And also the breathing--

I dive under Arondight's tip, and thrust the fairy sword toward his heart.

The match is concluded before the the sounds from the coin that's hitting the ground stops.

"First match, Satou's victory♪"

Oy, umpire.

"What are you doing Hayato! Even though he didn't move that fast, you let him win on purpose, you're being rude to your opponent."

Princess Maryest is scolding Hayato from the outfield, but it doesn't seem like it reaches his ears.

"This is surprising, was that really a level 30 movements?"

More than the hero, I'm surprised at my own movements myself. My body feels lighter than usual. As if I've switched something on, I feel that informations are entering me vividly to the point of being surprising.

The trajectory and timing of the hero's Arondight's blow were in accordance with my expectation. I've understood Hayato's habit after seeing his fight with the yellow-skinned demon, but more than that, I can predict his movement as if reading the future.

In order to confirm that sensation, I fight on the second match.

I avoid the horizontal slash by swaying back at minimum.

The sword is coming back abnormally fast, I block it with the guard on the reverse side of my hand that holds my sword.

When I show an opening for a very little bit, the hero kicks toward my side abdomen

I predict it, handle it, and purposely receive the attack while breaking the opponent's balance.

It feels like when I fought a strong player in a fighting game. I want to fight with elder Dohar again. I should be able to fight decently without feeling like I'm being led by the nose this time.

More, and more.

The tip of the sword swing for a bit before it's swung, the subtle difference

in the gripping power of the sword's handle, there are information everywhere.

I relish every corner of my body during the fight with the hero.

And--

The fun time is over all too soon.

>[Foreseeing: Anti-Personnel Battle Skill Acquired]

>Title [Sword Dancer] Acquired

8-24. The Hero and Satou (3)

Satou's here. Wedding is a joyous moment. Regardless of anyone, it's a joyous moment. My wallet might become a tiny bit desolate for the congratulatory gifts, but it's a joyous moment. That's why, please, spare me from three weddings and more in one month, Satou's here.

◇

"Even if I didn't use active skills, I didn't think that I would lose five times in a row."
"You were able to win in the end weren't you."
"That's cause I wouldn't be able to show my face in front of my companions if it was a complete defeat."

The hero who's slumping on the ground on all fours is restarting himself.

The fight was supposed to end after the first two, but we got too absorbed, we fought for many times consecutively. It was because the hero started saying, "One more fight.", when he was defeated for the second time in a row.
Thanks to it, I acquired [Foreseeing: Inter-Personal Battle] skill, but I might have gone overboard.
Maybe because he couldn't use his usual battle-related skills, the hero was full of subtle opening during the battle, so it was easy with the Foreseeing.

I peel off Arisa who's been hugging my shoulder and repeatedly poking my cheek while I'm sitting. "Ehehe~ You didn't want to let go of me so much you forgot yourself~", she said. For both our sakes, I won't tell her the truth.

The hero is talking about something to princess Maryest, but then she goes back ahead of us toward the underground passage. Since the white crocodile has become a landmark, she probably won't lose her way.

"Geez, even though you didn't move that fast, you foresaw all of my attacks-

-and so, are you a transported, or a reincarnated person? You used a unique skill of continuous movement earlier right?"

The hero asks with confidence.

"No,--"
"Ah, it's not like the matches' result is annulled y'know."

I wanted to deny since it was a groundless claim, but the hero held back my hand.
That's right, there's no other people here anyway, I guess I should exchange information with each other. The hero probably sent princess Maryest back first since he wanted to do that.

I told him about how I wasn't sure if I was a transported or a reincarnated person myself, the possibility that the memory just before and after I got transported to this world was missing, and various details about how I met Arisa and the others. Of course I didn't talk about my unique skills, the matter about meteor shower, and level.

"Satou, do you know about a kingdom called Rumooku?"
"Yes, I have an acquaintance from that kingdom."
"Is that so, you might have been summoned by that kingdom."

From the hero's story, the empire sent an earskin spy who had infiltrated there and confirmed that the kingdom summoned 7-8 other worlders.

The third person who should have been dead was also under the spy's care. After he was saved, he did intelligence works with the spy for several months, but when the spy was going to take him along to the Saga empire, he went missing. They've confirmed that he didn't have special power when they were together, so the empire didn't even deploy something like a pursuit team. He also ran away right after he was summoned, what a self-reliance guy.

We've exchanged various information, but excluding trivial things, most of it are the things I've said earlier. Of course it's not like there's no benefit to this. After Arisa slightly pesters the hero, he's going to give us advanced magic books, with the exception of forbidden and tactical magic that are

matters of national defense. Since they're made by manual writings, it'll take at least half a year at the soonest.
Moreover, he's also going to arrange a pass to Saga empire, and a written guarantee of Saga empire embassy for us.

These looks useful for when we're sightseeing on Saga empire in the future.

Oh right, I make him to promise with [Hero's Vow] to keep the matter about me being an other worlder a secret. I don't know how much I can trust him, but since other worlders are seemingly decent enough, it probably won't become a big problem. Also, the hero seems to be convinced from my stories that I am the eighth person from Rumooku kingdom.

"There is this the absurd beautiful girl before, and there's this boy, these two have made me realize that there are still strong people out there. Just level isn't everything huh."

My ears hurt from the hero's words.
However, seeing how the words don't seem to have any sarcasm, he doesn't seem to think that that was me. However, beautiful girl he said, I didn't disguise myself as a woman in particular, and I didn't show my face either, so where did that [Beautiful] came from.

"Beautiful girl?"
"Yeah, it was a monstrous fellow who mowed down the great fish that appeared in the duchy capital's sky with a single beam, and toyed around with an upper demon like it was a child. Since she had a violet hair, she was probably a reincarnated person."
"Oh my, that's really amazing huh."

Arisa, your prim and proper way of speaking is disturbed y'know.

Apparently, the hero suspects that the masked hero is Arisa. The violet hair certainly matches, and Arisa is hiding her unique skill from the hero. So it's not strange if the hero thinks that she has a unique skill that lets her change into adult form. It can't be helped if he misunderstands.
It seems that he doesn't think that I'm Nanashi at all. I'm really glad that I changed my way of talking. Yup, let's decide that it's a good thing.

Just in case, I try confirming something with the hero, it seems that a reincarnated person doesn't always have violet hair, but a reincarnated person who has violet hair is sure to have unique skills.

Arisa turns her face to me with a swoosh. Even though she moves like Pochi, it feels more like a horror rather than looking cute.
She speaks only with her lips without voice, "It's you right?", as she asks, I nod.

"Was it, by any chance, your favorite type?"
"I couldn't see her face, but she was 15 years old. If she was five years younger, it might've been dangerous."

Spare me from BL!

Let's stop using that masked hero way of speaking in the future.
Arisa is shaking a little. She's probably enduring from laughing out loud, but it'll expose me to the hero, so please do stop it.
Later, when we're practicing at night, Arisa bursts out laughing until she runs out of breath after she hears about the details of the beautiful girl. I'll make better upright clothes later. I promise so in my heart.
Later, I'm almost made to wear woman's clothes, but that alone, I refuse firmly.

"Putting love things aside, I want to meet her once again. I forgot to say thanks to that fellow for saving my life, and protecting the reputation of hero. My principle is to give back debt as soon as possible after all."

Well now? He certainly said, "I won't say thanks" though. Was that about me reducing the demon's health?

He also wanted to apologize for the rudeness of his companions. Did the hero's companions do anything rude to me? I don't remember any, but I can just ask about it when I'm back to the masked hero mode.

Since the hero party are going to stay until the duke's grandson's marriage, I guess I'll go once until then.

◇

"Beautiful~""Nanodesu!"
"White dress."
"Wonderful right~ white dress are better than kimono for wedding after all~"
"Master, I wish to reproduce the flower decorations that are on the bride."
"Quite a gorgeous parade this is."
"She looks very happy. I want to be like that bride."

After the wedding of the duke's grandson, lady Ringrande's little brother, is over, they're debuting to the commoners on a parade. Since the parade is going to pass through the road exactly in front of the mansion we're staying, everyone is lined up while watching the parade.
Lady Karina is attending the wedding with her little brother, so she's not here. I feel that the little brother has been accompanying lady Karina quite often recently. He's probably a siscon.

Pochi and Tama are in high tensions, I guess they're charmed by the wedding dress even though they're still kids. Tama has climbed on top of my head, and Pochi is flaying around her arm while grasping my sleeves. Mia is copying Tama, but since it's dangerous, I catch her midway, and let her getting carried by me on my back. Liza is the only calm one, but she's intensely watching the bride, so it's not like she's not interested.

"Chevalier-sama, a messenger of viscount Shimen has come."
"Ah, I'll go soon."

I am guided by the mansion maid to meet the visitor. I've checked on the map earlier, the visitor is Natarina-san from the scroll workshop. The ordered scrolls have most likely been completed.

"Then, these are the requested items."

I fully paid the scrolls I ordered at the beginning that had been completed faster than scheduled.

"I gratefully accept. Right, the variation of Magick Sword we've talked about

before is complete."
"Is that true? It hasn't even been three days since we talked you know?"

It's a new magic that comes upon me when I was watching Claiomh Solais' movements. Fighting while magick swords are flying independently.
There's already an auto-moving magic, [Nature Magic: Dancing Blade], so it was easier to make than expected.

I ordered several more original magic, and magic that aren't available in scrolls for sale. Of course, I pay the advance payment in cash.
I'm told that they can only make 3-5 scrolls in a month, so it's going to be close to when I'm about to return from Bornean forest, and thus we're going to hire a trusted trading company to transport them.

Since I can visit them alone anytime with Sky Drive, it's fine.

◇

I'm providing the dishes for the wedding reception tonight. I somehow feel like a servant of the duke, but it's not all bad.

"Heya, Sir Pendragon, I've made the rounds in hurry to come and eat your dishes."
"You too eh earl Houen, I'm also crazy with the shrimp tempura."
"Marquis Lloyd, the red pickled gingers are surely easier to eat than the tempura."

Just like that, I was able to talk freely with relatively upper ranked nobles. I don't intend to be successful as a noble, but it's a good thing to have someone to rely on if anything happens. The demerits are the troublesome adults who occasionally asks me to marry girls of primary and middle school ages. Most of them pulled back when I said that I had a fiancee, but sometimes there are persistent ones that were troubling.

Several nobles show their consent to invest and send exchange students to Muno city, so consul Nina can probably feel relieved.
However, even though I've refused Nina-san's letter, I end up going by her

plan. It's mysterious.

"Chevalier-sama, what are today's snacks?　I'm looking forward to it."
"Even though Muno roll is delicious, crepes is the best."
"To celebrate Tisrad-sama's occassion, I have prepared a special dish."
"My, I look forward to it."
"Yes, it's something to look forward to."

Recently, I've made more beautiful women acquaintances, not only girls. It's sad that most of them are married, but there's no problem to enjoy the love (bad) from afar right.
The sweets today is a lulu fruits and strawberries hall cake. I was finally able to bake sponge cake the other day, so I've made an extraordinarily big hall cake for this wedding.

I feel that this is a culture hazard, but when I see the dishes on Gugurian and duchy capital, it's probably only a matter of time for the dishes I make, so I present it without worry. Arisa didn't stop me too, but it must be because she had lost to her appetite. However, it might have been better if I hold back with the mayonaise and the fresh cream. I'm afraid that a lot of people might become plump.

I treated everyone in the mansion with the strawberry cake trial-runs, but it became a grand outbreak that does not only involve the youth tropes, but also Lulu and the maids. In the end, I baked the cake until everyone was satisfied. One person probably ate one hall cake I wonder. In addition, Arisa and me got only one slice. Diet is a severe and drawn-out fight.

"Aah, the bitterness from the cake that I couldn't eat myself won't disappear~ It was hard for an unmarried woman past thirty to celebrate her own birthday with a convenient store cake."

A, Arisa, please stop with the realistic sob story. I'll let you eat as much as you want when the diet is over, please endure it firmly for now.

"Pay attention everyone! To commemorate the wedding of Tisrad-sama and Miniem-sama, proudly coming from baron Muno territory, Sir Pendragon the miracle chef presents the lost dish from the era of ancestor king Yamato-sama! The entrance of the wedding cake!"

I'm already accustomed to being called miracle chef. They will probably forget about it soon after I leave the duchy capital.

The maids carry the four columns of the cake from the carriage. The cake is deliberately wrapped with cloth on the outside to instill special feeling. Of course it was Arisa's idea.

"Well then, the bride and groom will cut the cake together!"

Even though the the people here are awfully excited, Arisa is strangely depressed.

"Ah, even in this world, I'm on the side of the people who congratulate these wedding couple huh."
"Mou, oh Arisa, didn't you say that you'd get master to do it in 10 years."
"T, that's right. Alright, I'll polish myself hard to become a woman!"

Lulu cheers her up until she's revived, but you shouldn't rouse her that far. So maiden-like.

Unrelated with Arisa's determination, fireworks color the sky while matching the couple cut the cake. It's a grand fireworks magic by fire and light magicians groups lead by viscount Shimen.

Not only the newlyweds, couples that are on this wedding hall are joining their shoulders together while gazing ecstatically at the fleeting lights of the large flowers that illuminate the sky.

Pestered by Pochi and Tama who have seen this fireworks, that night I show them various fireworks in the garden of the mansion.

Not long after that, I make a set of firework magic tools.

8-25. Parting at Duchy Capital Night

Satou's here. Infiltrating the enemy camp to save your friends and lover who have been caught. It's a classic scene in movies, but it's something that doesn't quite happen in real life. However, looks like it's common in the other world...

◇

"Hufh, it's karaage af-ter-a-long-while."
"Yay～?" "Karaage nanodesu～"

Arisa is delighted to see karaage on her own plate.
She was also prohibited to eat deep fried food for the past one week after all. I forgot Arisa's age, so the diet was too effective, thus I changed the plan to only forbid her on snacking, and overeating. Of course, I did not tell Arisa about the miscalculation. I only told her that I'd make it laxer.

Mia's shares are seasoned rice in a bamboo shoot and boiled vegetables. Even though the bamboo shoot looks like a green bamboo, it can be eaten like a normal bamboo shoot, it's a fantasy ingredient. I'd have liked if I don't have to peel it, but it wasn't quite that lenient.

"Euh?　What's this karaage?　It's not a chicken, nor a pork. I think I've eaten this before, but I can't remember～."

When Arisa is still chewing one piece of the karaage, the three beastkin girls ask for more, so I take out the [Whale] karaage from the heating magic tool and put it on the platter.

I have a lot, so eat as much as you like.

It was outside of my calculation to have that much. Considering where it comes from, it's not like I cannot hold a whale meat festival carefreely, but it'll be a waste.

If I had just acquired it sooner, I could bring it to baron Muno territory via transporter, but the food situation in the territory has already been improved. Or I should say arranged instead I guess.

During the tea parties, the chattering noble women told me about nobles who were troubled as to where they could direct those kind of items. Thanks to that, I procured things like old rice, dried fish, and pickled vegetables in large quantities cheaply. They're currently being transported to baron Muno territory. I've hired guards to escort them due to the sheer quantities. Since they're introduced by the viscount Shimen, an influential man in the duchy capital, they must be reliable.

Let's return to the topic.
While Arisa continues chewing, she finally remembers what the meat is made from.

"I know, it's whale right!"

As expected of Arisa.

"They came out as Yamatoni, or Tatsutaage during lunch a long time ago~ but, you did well to get something like whale meat."
"Yeah, the goods arrived just at the right time."

Yes, Arisa didn't see the great monstrous fish. Therefore, she doesn't notice that great monstrous fish = whale. There's this words of wisdom that says ignorance is a bliss.

"Hamburg steak is the strongest, but whale karaage is eveen stronger nodesu!"
"Delish~"

Tama wolfs down the karaage while doing impression like a Nagoya person. I'm glad that it's to their liking.

"Master, isn't this meat something that's quite expensive? I feel like my power swells up every time I bite it."

I wonder. I didn't experience such thing when I food-tasted it in advance for poison before, but that might be Liza's expression for the deliciousness.

"Every biteful~""The meat is pulsing nanodesu."

Un, Pochi. I understand, that you like it, but eat it calmly. Please don't say scary things like pulsing meat.
You made me remember meat-man that came out in an old game.

"It's truly delicious. Pochi, Tama, I have reserved that karaage. Be content with the karaage on the forks on both of your hands. Ah, Nana, don't eat it so off-handedly, savor the taste more. Lulu, don't be so modest, eat more."

And also Liza, calm down.

Everyone asks for second helping so much, they can't eat calmly. It might have been a mistake to take the karaage out of the heating magic tool to the large platter.

Seasoned bamboo shoot rice and whale karaage go well together, but I should prohibit it.

"Uuu, Satou."

I have to promise the sulking Mia a new sweets, but well it can't be helped. I should invent more food other than meat.

I thought of treating lady Karina and her maids too, but they were out for the promise with the little brother-kun.
We're planning to depart from the duchy capital in the morning of the day after tomorrow, so I guess I should make a bit of feast for tomorrow night.

◇

The last day of the dark auction is wrapped in bizarre enthusiasm.

The princess of the fallen kingdom is going to be exhibited today, that might

be the reason. I feel like this world have poisoned me a bit as I have become someone who can plainly accept the fact that people are being sold like commodities.

This auction hall is as large as a theater hall, the first floor is filled with seats for general bidders, while the second floor has box seats-like seats for nobles. Since the agent man from before has secured one seat on the noble seating in consideration of me, this time I can bid the exhibited items relaxedly. As expected, the people who work as agents are nicely attentive. They'd make me misunderstand like I'm a VIP if they gave me such service.

The first exhibition was for my casted magic sword, and it was immediately won. I tried to offer 10 set of it in jest, but they were all sold just like that. The one who's bought it is the military accountant that has requested it. The casted magic swords have the name Nanashi inscriptions just like before. The swords are sharp-pointed one-handed swords, which are the most popular form in the duchy capital.

Actually, there aren't only these 10 casted magic swords, I have scattered another 10 to be exhibited. It's not only swords, I've also mixed in Magic Halberds among them. I've added it since there's this person who lost the bidding against the military accountant before. I also made three times more the same kind medicines as before to be exhibited here.

Since the agent is excellent, they're probably going to be sold out soon.

There's a rare item called [Gift Orb] being exhibited.

It seems like it can give the user a skill. The one being exhibited now is the [Fire Magic Skill Gift Orb]. After some fierce competition, it was sold for 200 gold coins.

According to the agent's story, Gift Orbs always gets sold at high price. They comes from the labyrinth city, and only five of them appear in the market in a year it seems. Looks like Gift Orbs that are not used for 10 years will lose their effects.

I ask the agent if there's anyone who has Chanting skill Gift Orb, but he doesn't seem to know. It'd be troublesome if he became suspicious, so I

didn't ask about [Chanting] in pinpoint. I asked about 5-6 skills.

The bidding for [Aerodynamic Engine of Airship] is unexpectedly unpopular.

Calling it match-fixing would be bad, but it seemed that it was arranged for the powerful nobles who wanted this kind of item.

Of course I also didn't bid.

When I was visiting the airship garage at the duke castle, the factory manager whom I became acquainted with told me that they will be servicing a broken air power engine in a few days, so he was currently in break. It's most likely this one. I'm going to prepare for departure tomorrow, but I'll go there and ask if I can see the exposed parts of the engine.

The thing that I wanted the most [Research Book of Ancient Language] turned out to be something that went way over my expectation.

However I look at it, it looks like a half-size note book. It's probably a belonging of a transported person. I had told the agent that I would bid up to 40 gold coins, but I raised the limit until 300 gold coins. With this, I'll cry if the note contains things like self-poetries, or grudge notes.

Thanks to a guy who competed desperately, the price was raised too much. I could have easily bought it for 10 gold coins if that guy wasn't here, but he opened the bid with 114 gold coins outright.

The agent told me the bidder, so I looked at him, turned out it was an acquaintance.
The heck are you doing hero.

I had prepared myself to compete with the hero again for the next item, [An Unknown Black Plank], but since he didn't bid for it for some reason, I was able to buy [Smartphone] for 23 gold coins. I've never seen the phone, and it also has unfamiliar maker, but it's probably a smartphone. I wonder if the battery is drained, the electricity doesn't run even after I've pushed the switch.

It's probably something that the human who has [Research Book of Ancient Language] kept. I asked the agent if they could sell me the way they obtained the items. I set the upper limit of the information to be 10 gold coins.

◇

And then, the [Princess of Fallen Kingdom] is exhibited. It's a 9 years old girl who's completely white.

Tama is cuter, but this girl is quite cute too.
She's a former princess of white-haired tigerkin. That reminds me, the tigerkin kingdom was invaded by the weaselkin kingdom wasn't it.

I finally understand now.

This is the reason why several beastkin people are gathering in the sewers since a while ago, they're going to infiltrate this hall. Looks like some of them are infiltrating from the ventilation duct. There's no one who guards that place so it's fine, but the operation will be blown if anyone sees them. I secretly push back a squirrelkin girl who's broken her balance and is going to fall with [Magic Hand].

The bidding is getting heated, it's been raised until 120 gold coins. Both bidders are humans. One is a noble from the duchy capital, but the other is a noble from a kingdom I've never heard. The former is easy to understand from his lustful expression, but the latter has bloodshot eyes that are scary. Looks like he has some kind of grudges.

I feel the presence of magic, so I look over the location where it comes from, there's a man who produces a black ball. Apparently, that ball is going to erase the illumination in this room.

A voice shouts out "Fire!" with a cliché voice from the direction of east exit and come the white smoke. When the panic is building up, the light

disappear, and the rescue team that has infiltrated from the sewer saves the tiger princess.

Nice~ I feel like seeing some kind of movie.

Since it seems like they'll be surrounded by the guarding soldiers, I secretly give them helps them with [Magic hand] under the cover of the darkness. Since the foreign noble from earlier had started to chant Firebolt magic, I used [Magic Hand] to make him faint with a suitable-looking jar. What a dangerous guy.

I invoked [Clairhearing] beside the tiger princess, so I could hear various things.

>[White-tigerkin Language Skill Acquired]

Oops, they're conversing in their native language huh. I allocate a bit of points to it. It'll be fine to just complement the small nuances in my brain.

『Princess Runya, I've come for you.』
『Galgaoron-sama, I believed that you would surely came to help me.』
『Gal-aniki, we should escape soon.』
『That's right, leaving aside the weaselkins, we absolutely won't be able to escape if the duke guards come.』
『Alright, let's pull back!』
『『Ou!』』

Since the voice sounds familiar, I look at them in darkness, they're faces that I know after all. It's the white tiger-kun and his follower from that time. Even though he's someone who rescues a little girl, he's also kicking sea lion-kin children huh. I intended to help their escape, but that has disappeared somehow. Do your best for the rest.

When I heard about it later, some tigerkins lost their lives to the pursuit force, but it seems that the tiger princess has safely escaped. I'm not that interested with them, but I check the map in order to avoid getting involved, they're moving through the forest toward the royal capital of Shiga kingdom, not the tigerkin country. They're probably going for the self-

dominion of beastkin. Since they're going to the opposite direction to where we're going, we won't meet them again.

Actually, a human former princess was going to be exhibited after the tiger princess.

However, since the auction was suspended due to this disturbance, she was entrusted to the duke's house by the duke's recommendation. I'm not privy of the detail, but she seems to be an illegitimate princess of the kingdom where the fiance of princess Menea comes from.

Now, then, after earning abnormal amount of income, and shake off the ones tailing me, let's go on a stroll on the night town.
I have no ulterior motives, I'm just going on a stroll.

Even though I returned with candy set as souvenirs, I got accused of playing around at night for some reason.

8-26. Parting at Duchy Capital Night (2)

Satou's here. I'm reminded of my graduation when I hear the word departure. I don't make a connection between departure and final farewell, maybe because I come from a world where it doesn't even take 2-3 days to meet people on the other side of the planet. Is it a bit heavier on the other world?

◇

The result of the dark auction last night is better than I've thought.

The cast magic swords were sold at the expected prices, but the cast magic spear, and the cast magic halberd were all sold at quite high prices. The cast magic spear particularly, due to the bidding fight between a man who looked like an explorer, and another man who was wearing an elegant armor, it was sold for 270 gold coins. I wonder if the added paralysis effect from the electricity was the cause of this success. I probably shouldn't think about the cost.

Since I had gained more profit than I expected, I decided to donate 10 gold coins for the Tenion emergency food distribution and the orphanage each. Since more than this would be out of common sense, I restrained myself.

About the note book that I've won, the other half of its inside is torn in two. Furthermore, it looks like the one who's written this note book is a cautious guy, it's written in original cipher. When I was deciphering it, I acquired [Decryption] skill, so I solved it easily.

The way to make soap, the way to make glass and mirror, the way to make gum, etc....
Various technologies that look like it'll be useful for someone who has just arrived in another world are written in the note book. However, I can already make most of them, unfortunately. If only I got it earlier.

The lucky find is his curry recipe. There's also the method to create spice written. The problem is if I can find the spice or not. Since there are even ways to create soba and udon, this might be a bargain.

Unfortunately, there is no information about the owner.
I think it's the third person that hero Hayato's mentioned, since he's a shrewd guy, let's pray that he's currently enjoying the other world life.

◇

"Good evening, hero Hayato."

I visit the hero's room in Nanashi mode wearing slightly modest clothes in the night before the hero party departs from the duchy capital. Since some members of his party have good noses like Pochi and the other, I've used [Deodorant] magic.

"Nanashi huh, how did you infiltrate here?"
"With cheat."

It's a convenient word.

Right after I entered the room from the window, the earkin girls who seemed to be the hero's companions suddenly apologized. Since forgiving them like that was 'that', I was allowed to touch the girls' ears as the compensation. Un, it's quite nice.

Afterward, the hero thanked me.
He said the same thing he did when I was Satou, but when he said, 'want to feel my ears as a thank?', I involuntarily dropped my fist on the hero's head. I thought that lady Ringrande, and princess Maryest would complain since I hit the hero, but it seems that he was usually dealt like that anyway, so everyone looked like they thought it was a matter of course. Princess Maryest even told me not to go easy on him. Is it fine hero.

When he offered some kind of item as a reward, I told him I wanted an Aerodynamic Engine in a jest since I didn't need anything particular, but the

hero tried to hurriedly take out the aerodynamic engine of his ship which seemed to be called Jules Verne. Since I had planned to create the aerodynamic engine myself, I declined the rare offer. Princess Maryest looked obviously relieved, the engine was probably quite precious.

In the end, it was decided that the hero is going to give me various rare metal like mithril, and orichalcum. He got them from the inside of the labyrinth, but since he loaned them to the empire's arsenal, he didn't have any in hand.
Orichalcum makes my heart feels excited, although I'll only get it later.

Oops, I forgot the main reason I came here.

"This is?"
"I guess you've never seen one? It's a magic tool that can change a person into a demon you know."

I took out a short horn from the Storage and threw it to the hero. It's the one from the demon that came out in Gururian city.

"What did you say?!"
"W, where did you get this!?"

The former is princess Maryest, and the later is lady Ringrande. By the look of her expression and words, apparently, lady Ringrande has heard the thing about the short horn from the duke. Since the demons have been subjugated in various cities of the duchy, there's no way that people who are related to the duke don't know.

"Did you know about it? Ringrande."
"I'm sorry, since I learned it as a young woman of the duke family, I couldn't disclose it."

What a weirdly stiff person. Although the duke probably couldn't openly declare it due to his position, I think he leaked it to her so she could tell the hero.

"Hey, onee-san. Is this short horn unusual?"
"Yes, this is the first time I've seen it. Even in the long history of Saga

empire's fights with the demon, this item never appears even once."

It's a new item huh.

"I obtained it when I defeated a lower demon in another territory. Looks like it can't be used anymore, so I'll give it if you want, you know?"

While thanking me, princess Maryest timidly receives the short horn, and gets it stored in the hero's infinite stowing (Inventory). Although it might not be needed since she looks like someone with a good head, I give her a firm warning, "Handle it carefully okay."

Due to this item, I'm made to hold a magic tool that can be used to communicate with each other. Looks like he's been intending to give it to me from the beginning, the tool is quickly taken out of the hero's inventory. I don't have particular problem with it, so we decide to activate the communication together at 0 hour late at night every 10 days to keep in touch with each other. Since I only have hour hand to check on time, they give me clock magic tool.
This is something that I know later on, but the time on this clock went out of order when I put it in the Storage, so I left it to tick in the Item Box.

I'm worried if it has a tracking function, but it seems that it can't tell location beside at the time where I activate the communication. Since it's used to contact spies who infiltrate another countries, it's made to be undetectable beside at the time of communication. I want to dismantle it for a bit, but let's restrain myself.

◇

I'm unexpectedly free the day before the departure.
Since I was doing things like going around greeting my acquaintances, and buying ingredients, and flavoring--particularly sugar--little by little everyday, there is nothing left that need to be done in a hurry.

Everyone has been finished getting baptized in the Tenion temple this morning.

>[Holy Magic: Tenion Belief Skill Acquired]

This is for the sake of the revival ceremony by the head miko-san in case of emergency.
For some reason, Arisa and me were the only two who didn't get baptized.
We did receive the ceremony itself, but we didn't get the [Believer of Tenion] title like everyone else.

Although it seemed that no one around me knew about it, lady Sera said, "With this, Satou-san is also a believer of Tenion.", while looking very happy.

"Satou-san, please accept this."

Lady Sera handed me an item called [Tenion's Bell]. After deciphering the item explanation, it seems to [Resonate with the big bell on Tenion temple].
Apparently, the big bell in Tenion temple rings when an emergency happens. This bell is a magic tool that can resonate with the big bell, it can sense the danger even if they're separated with the distance between the royal capital and the duchy capital.

Looks like it only acts as the receptor.

"Look, I have it too. We have a matching pair right."
"That's right."

I cannot reject lady Sera who's genuinely happy, I take it obediently.
It's probably, or rather, it's 9 out 10 that it was instigated by the head miko-san, but I still wore the bell.

◇

When we've returned to the mansion after the baptism, some visitors are waiting.
It's the next baron Muno, the little brother-kun of lady Karina. He doesn't have an appointment, but he's the young lord of my employer after all, I

guess it's fine.

"Sir Pendragon, please forgive me for intruding suddenly."
"Young lord is always welcome to visit me."

I'm going to the (airship) garage in the noon, so let's finish this quickly.

"Let's hear it frankly then. Do you have any intention of marrying Karina-neesan?"
"I do not."

Oops, I should have been a bit more indirect.
The little brother-kun is angry with red face.

"Are you throwing away my big sister after you've done playing around with her! Just because you're a direct retainer of father--"
"It's a misunderstanding."

Although it's rather rude of me, I cover the words of the enraged little brother-kun with another.

"I'll say this again, it's a misunderstanding. Karina-sama and me are not in a relationship you know?"
"However, weren't you two getting along well like a couple during the banquet at Gururian city!"

The way he says it as if it's be better if we don't get along. You siscon.

"The viceroy had sent invitations for both Karina-sama, and me to attend the banquet. Since we both didn't have a partner, I went together with Karina-sama."

Thanks to that, I had to shell out some big expenses, but since I was able to see the volume and the valley, I don't have any regret. That was a good scenery.

"Orion! What are you doing exactly!"

Ah, even though I purposely didn't call his name. Lady Karina, you're

heartless.
The little brother-kun's name is Orion Muno. He's the victim of baron Muno's hero hobby like me. Well, I chose it myself in my case, so victim isn't quite right.

Now then, I guess I should work out the misunderstanding.

"Karina-sama."
"What is it?"

Karina-sama replies with a slight caution.

"Do you like me?"
"Na, wha, that--"
"Aneue?" <TLN: Something like, "esteemed older sister.">
"T, there's no way that's true! Thing like me liking Satou, there is absolutely no way that can happen!"

So it's true, this type does self-destruct if openly confronted. I was slightly troubled in case she answered "Yes", but I wouldn't be this cold-hearted if she was that sweet.

"Orion-sama, as you can see, the rumor about us being lovers is groundless. Karina-sama is more suited to a young man from old and honorable lines of a great noble."
"U, umu, I'm glad that you know your place as a chevalier. Please take care of me from now on."
"Yes, likewise."

In other word, Orion-kun probably came to warn an upstart noble that he was not a match for his relative. I pray that it's not aggravated by the siscon. This Orion-kun seems to be engaged with the duke's daughter who has different mother than lady Ringrande and Sera. Since the partner is still 7 years old, the marriage is still a talk for the future.

◇

I visited the duke airship garage in the afternoon since they were going to dismantle the previously-mentioned aerodynamic engine.

When I was going to the garage, I looked for the moving person in the painting before, but I couldn't see it since the hanged paintings had changed, I wondered if they're rotating it everyday. I asked a maid-san who were taking care of other artworks, but she said that she didn't know such painting while looking at me dubiously. That reminds me, when I talked about it during the tea party back then they thought I was just boasting. I wonder if I was half-asleep and was mistaken. It's a mysterious story.

There were unusually lot of people in the garage, so I couldn't see the engine closely. It couldn't be helped, so I moved away for a bit and used [Distance View] to inspect the engine. The aerodynamic engine was like an air cooling radiator with many fins.

Looks like the fin parts are made from Air Fish's materials. It seems the fin gains buoyancy by sending magic through the air.
Since it doesn't look like how hot-air balloons work, the mechanism doesn't follow the law of physic that I know.

When I check my storage, several parasites that crippled the prince have parts that can be made into fins on them, so I dive to the labyrinth late at night, and dismantle them. Since they can't be used as is, I'll process them along the way to Bornean forest.

I had materials from the land reclamation back then, so I made an ark that could even hold the wagon. I intend to put the aerodynamic engine in this ark. I might possibly carry it with [Magic Hand] until the completion of the aerodynamic engine.

However, I guess this is the last time I can use this place. Since it's truly convenient, I'd even like to settle down in the duchy capital.

◇

Next morning, the previous earl couple with all their employees sent us off

as we departed from the duchy capital.

Lady Karina had also wanted to tag along, but since I left her with the large amount of documents and letters for Nina-san, she reluctantly agreed to go back to baron Muno territory. There are collections of recipes for Gelt-san in Muno city among the documents. Since I had sent the necessary ingredients in advance, it's probably alright.
I also entrusted cast magic swords for sir Zotor, and Hauto. Since I made it with fluid control magic that I had acquired, their structures are completely different than the ones I sold in the dark auction. The outer appearances of the swords are rounded like the ones I've made for Pochi and the others as their peculiar characteristics. I wonder if you can imagine it if I say that they look like sword-length stretched rice spoons? I've made the sword's tip looks like a sharpened reverse R for stabbing. They have Satou Pendragon inscriptions, not Nanashi.
Also, I secretly give the maid manager, Pina, the traveling expense for their trip back. I heard remarks that young unmarried women shouldn't do like getting spared from sleeping in the barn since they were working as merchants' escorts during the long journey, so please enjoy the return trip at least.

When the ship has begun to depart, lady Sera comes to see us off. Please stop waving your hands while crying like it's a final farewell. I feel a bit embarrassed.

After spending one day and one night, we got off the ship in a town along the way that had less than 10.000 total population. From there, we're traveling on the wagon after a long time off. Along the way to Bornean forest, There's going to be another town with the same scale as this one, but beside that, there are only several villages. I'm glad that at least it's not an unexplored region.

Now, let's go, to the elven forest.

Intermission: Dance and Tea Party

Tomorrow is my debut in the upper society at last!

Even though I had been asking mother for a long time, she didn't let me to because it was still too early for me she said. But, at last. Yes, I've finally gotten permission to attend the ball at last.

"You're really lucky Lina."

It looks like Onee-sama is vexed to see me debuts at my 12 years old age since Onee-sama didn't debut in the upper society until she was 14.

But, but, but.
Since the permission comes suddenly, I have to use an old dress that mother used during her childhood. I can't say such spoiled thing like wanting a new dress like Onee-sama. If I said that, the talk about going the ball would be likely gone.

◇

Uwah, the castle! It's the castle!

"Wait, Lina. Your mouth. You're a lady from today on, pay attention to child-like gestures."
"My, oh Fia, you were also like that when you saw the castle for the first time. You two are really siters~"
"Hey, Teena. Please don't do that in front of Lina. There's this thing called older sister's dignity--"

Onee-sama is talking about something with Teena-san of viscount Brates house, but it passes through my ears.
Cause you know, look how many carriages there are in the castle! I wonder which house is that carriage from. Its round body is cute. My, there is even a golem carriage! Amazing, I want to ride it at least once~

"Now then, young lady, please your hand."

The castle footman opened the door, and father who was waiting outside held out his hand. Father is going to be my escort today.

"Hey, Fia. Why isn't the next baron Eto-sama escorting you."
"No way, Teena. That love is already over. Today the prince has especially come from the royal capital."
"If you're aiming too high, you'll miss your chance to get married you know?"
"You're one to say that Teena. Rather than that! Even if aiming for the prince is impossible, I can still go for his accompanying holy knight or the other attendant who has a promising future."

There are a lot among influential nobles who are engaged even before they're 10, but for middle nobles like us, many are still unmarried even after they become adult. There are some who have too high of ideals, they remain single even after they're over 20, but as for myself, I want to to get married by 17 years old at least. I'm alright with the other person looking ordinary, he just has to be gentle.

◇

Uwah, amazing.

I have a bad head if I do say so myself, I don't have any other word beside that.
Father escort me to the ball room with more than 100 gentlemen and ladies who are having pleasant talks.

But! It was too early to be surprised.

"Lina, this small hall is a waiting room for people who are debuting in the upper society."

There's this many people who are debuting! I wonder if everyone is aiming

for the prince after all?
I go around the small hall greeting everyone while father introduces me.

Ah, this is the first time I call my name this many times.

"You're in the way. Move it."
"I, I'm sorry."

When I was standing on the passage to the hall, I got scolded. He's a scary person wearing a white armor. I wonder if he's a knight? I apologized and conceded the way.

"You're not bad. Were you trying to immediately greet the prince?"
"Ah, Onee-sama. It's not like that, I was scolded for blocking the way."
"Blocking the way you said, a thin girl like won't be enough to block the way even if there are 10 of you right?"

When I think about it again, that's true. I wonder if there's some kind of reason?

◇

"Haa, I'm tired."
"Ara ara, let's wet our throats with something."

Together with Onee-sama and her friend, we're sitting on the sofa inside the ball room, and watch the ball. I didn't think that the ball I had always wanted to go was this hard. I don't remember most people whom I introduced myself to.

"Of course that would be so. I was seeing from the side, you were looking down the whole time you were being introduced right?"
"I mean, everyone was older than me, it was a bit scary."

I quench my throat with the fruit water that the maid-san's brought. As expected of duke-sama, not only it has fruit that I rarely eat, it even has ice.

"Mou, you two, it's too early to become tired."
"I'm sorry Teena. Leaving that aside, what is with the crowd earlier?"
"It seems there were specialties delicacies from baron Muno territory, but nothing had remained on the plates when I got there. It might have been really delicious, uncles and his friends were competing to eat it."

To even make the older men who are used to gourmet food to compete with each other, I wonder if it's that delicious. I want to eat it even only for a mouthful.

"Disappointing huh. However, this is the first time I've heard baron Muno territory, is it a distant territory?"
"What are you saying, it's next to the duchy. There was a rumor of it getting attacked by the demon's army right."
"Ah, that! It was an epic about a magician with demi-human mercenaries who repulsed ten of thousands monster herds wasn't it."
"However, since the story came from sir Toruma, it's better if you take it with a grain of salt."

I've also heard about it.
The opponents who annihilated the army without even letting them get ready were turned around in a blink of an eye with just a small troop. He must be a giant man with scars covering his whole body. There are beautiful women on his side at beck, and if he wears an eyepatch, his atmosphere might be even strong--

"Lina, are you tired?"

--Ha. I indulged in my delusion. Since different dish are being displayed on the place with baron Muno cooking a while ago, we're going there to look around.

◇

Sweet smell tickles my nose. What smell is this?
Thin batter is spread and fried on top of a heating magic tool, some kind of red fruit and white soft thing are put on top of it and it gets enclosed.

What a skillful movement! I've seen the chef in my house cooks before, but it's completely different.

"Okay, here you go. Small lady-san."
"T, thank you very much!"

The chef presents the cuisine while smiling sweetly. I accept the plate that the black-haired attendant gives me.
When I look closer, this chef person isn't a servant is he? I mean, he's wearing such expensive-looking clothes. He's young, but he's surely from an influential noble house. Even Onee-sama, and Teena introduce themselves before they receive the cuisine.
I also give my name in panic. I understand when we are talking that he's a honorary chevalier-sama. Onee-sama and her friend seem to change their interest toward the dish after they've heard his peerage, but I think it's amazing to acquire a peerage with his own power even though he's this young.

I think of such thing until it's time to eat the dish. I sit down on the chair near Onee-sama and her friend, and use a small knife and a fork on the plate to put the dish on my mouth.

Delicious!

White soft sweetness melt in my mouth. I wonder if I'm chewing that red fruit? The slightly sour taste mixed with that white soft sweets are mixing, the inside of my mouth is in bliss. It's no very ladylike, but my lips begin to open involuntarily, and a smile leaks out.

"U, um, nice to meet you!"
"Y, yes, nice to meet you!"

When I've finished eating and handed the plate to the maid-san, a young gentleman calls me out. He also looks nervous, but my heart is shaking to the point like it'll explodes.
I was invited to my first dance by that person. Although I stepped on his foot since I was nervous, he also stepped on mine, so we were even. After we had finished dancing, his friend tried to invite me, but since he was a bit overbearing, I was afraid and somehow able to decline.

Men are a bit scary after all.

◇

I wanted to eat the [Crepes] from before once again, but it was already over. It seemed that the white soft things were all used up, "I'm sorry." he apologized kindly.
It's strange. Even though his nose isn't high, the area around his eyes aren't deep, and he can't be called handsome, I can't take my eyes off. I wonder if it's because of his calm demeanor, and his gentle expression?

"C, chevalier-sama! Would you dance with me if it's alright with you!"
"Yes, I'll be glad to."

I've invited him to a dance involuntarily. My voices were loud because I was too nervous, the eyes of everyone around were gathered to us. Ah, my face is hot.
Chevalier seemed to be slightly surprised, but he immediately agreed.

"Please don't be so nervous, it's fine to think the people around as trees and stones. Please think of me like your brother or father, and be at ease."

He patted my tense shoulders gently, and whispered so. Just a bit, really a bit of the tension in my shoulders come out, and I've become relaxed.
When the music starts, I'm dancing unlike falling like before. While we're dancing like fish in the water, he whispers "It's alright", "Be more relaxed there.", "Like a princess riding on the flow" which feel good, and then the music stops. To have this much fun in dancing with a skillful person! I have to exercise dancing more seriously from now on.
I wanted to dance for another tune, but since other girls were waiting for their turns, I refrained myself. It looks like I'll get bullied if I monopolize him.

"Lina, were you that skillful?"
"It was because Chevalier-sama was very good, I danced spontaneously."
"Fu~n, I have a rule against someone younger, so I'll pass."

Onee-sama is smiling badly while hiding bottom half of her face with a folding fan. She must be thinking of something, but if you don't do it moderately, you'll be late to get married you know?

◇

"Thank you for inviting me today--"

When I saw the person who visited the tea party I was having with Onee-sama and her friends at the salon, I almost dropped my cup.

Why is chevalier-sama here?

"Ufufufu, since he looked like Lina's favorite, I sent a written invitation together with your letter of thanks."
"You should thank Fia. A lot of girls from other houses have sent their invitations, it seems they're still competing even now."

Onee-sama, and Teena-sama whispered to both my ears.
Even though Chevalier-sama is surrounded by Onee-sama and her friends who look so attractive, he seems very calm not befitting of his age like always.

Tetra-sama!　Pushing your b, breasts on him while pretending to talk is cheating.
Ah, even Shiona-sama, are you two aiming for chevalier-sama who's of the same age?　I feel annoyed somehow in my chest.

If the house maid didn't come while bringing the present brought by chevalier-sama, I might cut myself inbetween them like a child.

The sweets are called Muno roll, and it taste like between the crepes from before and gururian. It's a bit heavier than crepes, but it suits the blue tea well. The blue tea are presents from Teena-sama, so I've never drank one with a brand though.

I was surprised to hear the story about the time he's granted the peerage when we were talking about the story concerning the cake. I mean, chevalier-sama is the hero of that defensive war of Muno city! He doesn't like it at all. I mean, his hair is silky, his arms are slender and supple, they hardly look like they swing a staff or a sword.

Since he had some business, he unfortunately couldn't accept the invitation to a dinner tonight.
When chevalier-sama was going back, father handed him a bag with fruits and they had a long talk about something. Those fruits are something from the orchard of our house. It's really bitter, and on top of being sour, it looks bad, so insects don't harm it, making it non-labour intensive fruits, but it can only be eaten by making it into pickles, however nowadays gabo fruits pickles have dominated the market. I wonder if that's why our house's fortune is slightly slumping.

◇

"Good day, Lina-sama."
"G,gud dai, chevlier-sana."

I was surprised to meet chevalier-sama when I came out of the passage out of the garden. Because of that, I fumbled. Ah, it's embarrassing.
Father looks restless, I wonder what happens? It smells really nice.
It looks like the black-haired attendant of chevalier-sama hands over a white box. What kind of sweets are those I wonder? Ah, even though I know it's improper, my lips are loosing.

"This is, sir Pendragon! W, were you really able to make a new use for that fruit?"
"Yes, I baked a cake using that fruit."

That white soft thing can certainly hides the sour fruits, but isn't that because of the white soft thing, not the fruit?
As a proof, that fruit's color become completely different because the slices have been wrapped with a lot of that white soft thing.

"This is, it doesn't look like that fruit, have you put something else inside?"
"No, the one on the top is that fruit. It changes color when heated."

Heating fruits? You usually cool them with well water.
To make that brown fruit becomes pink. The color looks really beautiful.

The maids cut it, and I timidly put the [Cake] on my mouth. People are just staring at it, and no one eats it.

Amazing! It softly melts. The texture is different than crepes, it's different than any sweets I've ever eaten.
This time, I put the sour part of the fruit on my mouth while being prepared. It's soft sweet and smooth. As I chew, the fiber feels different than strawberry, or apple.

I want to eat a bit more.
However, unfortunately, it seems to be over with one slice. The fork on the plate with the remaining white soft thing is taken, I endure the impulse to eat it. I'm already a lady who's made her upper society debut.

"I'm thinking of presenting this cake for the wedding of Tisrad-sama."

Ah, father is trembling with chevalier-sama's bomb remark. It's a terribly great honor to have the fruit used as a dish for the wedding of the next-next duke-sama. I understand the feeling of father who nods with trembling body from the unexpected offer.
Perhaps, this cheap fruits can sell more, and our house's finance will become better maybe.

I was called to father's room this night, and got asked if I wanted to send marriage proposal to chevalier-sama. Even though father hated and called honorary nobles shams in all his life.

Ehehehe, Lina Pendragon eh. It'd be nice if Chevalier-sama accepts. And then, the two of us will dance every night. It must be fun, no doubt about it.

I've eaten a delicious cake, and heard a wonderful story, it seems I will sleep pleasantly today.

Intermission: Orc Alchemist

I am of the ancient perished race--Ga Hou the orc.

The descendant of fools who followed the demon lord, made an enemy of the whole world and got themselves destroyed several hundreds years ago. There should be several groups hiding around the world even now, but no race would probably accept us. Even though the orc empire has been destroyed more than 600 years ago, the world never forgets the crime committed by orcs. Since we're long lived, we have learned the wisdom and techniques to survive with subsistence on the corners of the world, we are already unsuited to appear on the world.

"Ga Hou."
"Ru Heu huh, what's wrong. Did a guest come to the shop."
"Yup, it's the usual masked guest."

This place is rarely visited by human even for a place situated at the downtown outside of the duchy capital great wall. Since it's located beside the sewage filtration facility, the stench is quite terrible, beastkins who have sharp noses also rarely come near it. Although, if this filtration facility that was built at the time of orc empire didn't exist, the mother large river would have been more polluted. When I think so, I can forgive this stench--no, sorry, this stench is unbearable after all. I put on the usual perfumed mask, wear the hood, and go to the shop's front.

"How long do you intend to make me wait!"
"I, I'm sorry, then de requests, here are all the sleep inducing drugs."

When I'm talking to a guest, I always talk with stutters, and use a strange accent. If the other person looks down on me, it's a success.
Wonder why is this man always this exasperated whenever he comes here. I think he should relax his mind a bit more, but there is no need to give an advice. He'd only snap back if I gave him one. I will not do useless thing.
I begin explaining the small bottles that has been passed passed to and lined up on the counter. Even though he probably ignores it, I don't want to forgo my work ethic.

"One small bottle ish, six silverr coins. Dhere are three bottles, how many gold coins ish that?"
"Fuhn, you savages, can't you count. It's three gold coins."

Fumu, he didn't lower it too much. I'll let it off if it's just by three silver coins.

"A, as expectedd of noble-sama. Y, you count fast heu."
"Fuhn, this kind of things are easy for those who are of Shiga kingdom nobles."

Even though the thing about him being a noble should've been a secret, he plainly admitted it. But well, this guy's wallet is adorned with his metal family crest, so there's no need for him to imply it. Since the man himself seems like he wants to hide his identity, I'll keep silent.
The man lined up three gold coins on the counter, took the bottles into a leather case, and went out. He's probably not going to use them for something decent, but I have stopped worrying such thing 400 years ago. I guess I'll give these gold coins to Ro Han's community. I don't need thing like money for living in the sewer of the duchy capital.

◇

"Ga Hou, that."

There certainly is a suspicious group at the place she's pointing. I've seen those clothes. They were the same people who shouted crazy doctrine, "We should become demons in order to not get destroyed by the demon lord.", on the downtown's square. They're called Wings of Liberty--a fanatic group.

The ruin of the labyrinth should be up ahead. The labyrinth is completely dead anyway, and the teleport device to the underground labyrinth should be sealed off. High level cipher has been applied on the seal that no normal humans can possibly solve. Yes, let's believe they cannot enter.

Ru Heu leaves that place, and I approach the group.

When I check them with appraisal skill, there's one with [Abnormal Status: Demonic Possession]. I don't know what kind of demon is it, but I'm bad with fighting. I will flee from here.
Before the effect of invisibility skill wears off, I've left the scene.

◇

"Let me hide here, Ga Hou."

Blood-stained Ro Han falls down into the shop.
Looks like he quarreled with a wolfkin man. Of all thing to do for an orc, how pitiable. A young man who hasn't even lived for 50 years doing as he pleases like this, truly sad.
Right now is the season of the martial art tournament that opens once every three years. There are a lot of rowdy people strutting around, so someone who can't restrain his arms shouldn't have gone out.

I leave the treatment of Ro Han to Ru Heu, and go outside the shop.
It'll be troublesome if the authority comes here.

Fumu, I haven't seen a wolfkin in 200 years, do they have four arms now? They should have one head if I'm not mistaken, but isn't there another head beside the hairless one.

Now then, let's stop the self-concealment around here.
Apparently it's a lower class demon called short horn demon. It has decaying poison on its claws, a bothersome thing. Its saliva is a strong acid huh, how's the body doesn't get dissolved.

I can't let it runs amok in my shop right in front of my eyes.
I'm bad at fighting, but let's push it out to some place away from the shop.

I put on the magic activator ring, and consecutively chant [Exoskeleton (Shell Armor)], and [Physical Reinforcement (Light Boost)] in low voice.
They were lower class magic, but I gave priority to the shortness of the chanting.
I pull out a wooden pillar nearby and set it up. The demon who's playing

around with the chivalrous mercenary man is turning toward me. Before it stopped turning, and in unnatural stance, I strike it with the pillar with all my might, and push it away to an open space at the opposite side of the street.

People are running from the open space like they're rolling.
There are demi-human mercenaries nearby who are chivalrously assaulting the demon in succession. What a brave thing to do. I guess I'll go against my principle, and help them here. Alas, I don't want to see those brave young men fall victim to the demon's claws.

"■■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■ ■■■■——"

I drank the reserved magic augment medicine. It's working.

"——■■■ Exploding Flame Dragon (Drag Ignis)"

The mercenaries who were holding down the demon got rolled up on the magic for a bit, just for a bit. They should just get off with large burns, probably.
The demon is dying after getting burned by the Drag Ignis of advanced level magic. Even though I've become weaker with ages, to not die after it got hit by that much magic, quite resilient. I pick a spear that has fallen below and throw it to the demon who's inching forward despite its burn. The spear that was thrown with physical reinforcement in effect pierces deep into the demon, killing it.
Fumu, my body reacts to the first advanced magic since 100 years ago after all. I should have shot several intermediate magic to defeat it after all. I'll get Ru Heu massages my lower back when I return to the dwelling.

I take out the magic core from the crumbles of the demon, and toss it to the chief-like man of the mercenaries who have fought just now. A magic core this big is valuable, but this much quality isn't needed for medicines that I make. You guys can drink to your heart contents this night.

While the chief is thinking over picking the magic core, I pick up the demon horn that's fallen near my feet. It's an item called [Short Horn] according to the appraisal skill. Since the explanations that float in my mind are written in demon language, I'll check it on the dictionary when I return.

The content that I got from checking the dictionary was shocking.

That thing is an item that transforms a person into a demon. The demon that I defeated was probably the form of a young wolfkin that had been transformed.

Dreadful.
Demon--no. I'm worried that people will not retain their reason if the existence of this item becomes known. I can't help but wish that the nightmare of demi-human hunting from 400 years ago won't rampage on this land once again.

◇

Around three days after that, I feel turbulent waves from the underground. Don't tell me that the ancient great demon lord will revive. I hope it's just an unfounded fear.

◇

I can feel intense tremors since awhile ago.
There shouldn't be a hypocenter in this land. If this is caused by someones' fight, it must be between the hero and the demon lord. However, at the very least, I hope it's not dragons.

Ru Heu who finally couldn't keep still in the dwelling went to the underground passage where the wings of liberty group occupied for reconnaissance. It's not like I'm not worried, but there's probably no human that can see through Ru Heu's invisibility, although it's not quite at my level.

A few minutes after the underground tremors had stopped, Ru Heu returned like she was tumbling.

"Oh no Ga Hou. My face might had been seen."

As I understand, looks like her face was seen by a masked man who was flying at high speed when she was moving in the underground passage. To see through Ru Heu invisibility! I should be surprised at that, but why was he flying in an underground passage! I'm a bit lost at whether I should question that or not.

"If he was flying in high speed, then it should just have been in an instant. I don't think your race was known within that instant. However, as a precaution, you shouldn't approach the underground passage for a while."

Just to be sure, I guess we should go to a different continent for at least 100 years until it's been cooled down.
I also have to contact the family of Ri Fuu on the royal capital.

I go to the basement of my dwelling, where the teleport gate (portal) is. This artifact in the shape of constructed stones can connect to the same kind of portal that has been connected with space magic.

I gaze the portal that has been booted up after spending three days. The vermilion stones are truly beautiful.

"Torii has to be like this after all."
<TLN: Torii is the traditional Japanese shrine gate. They're usually painted vermilion.>

A voice came out of the place where there shouldn't be anyone, my heart felt as if it would flew out of my chest.

Ridiculous.

Ridiculous, ridiculous. Invisibility technique that surpasses my perception ability? There wasn't any report from the conspicuous white crocodile familiars that I had made to lurk. Were them all eluded?! Impossible.

A silver masked man is there.

I calmly talk to the intruder whom I normally would have eliminated.
That is because I've seen his title.

"Do you have any business, hero-dono."

Yes, he is the hero. The warrior of god that matches even the demon lord. A transcendence being whom an ordinary person will never exceed. Since I've been found out by that hero, elimination is impossible.

"Ah, it's nothing much. It looks like I have surprised your orc friend in the underground passage some times ago, so I've come here to tell you that I don't intend to spread it around."

What a useless consideration.

"I also don't intend to tell others about this teleport gate, so please be at ease. I won't talk about it to a third party either."
"Is that alright?"
"Isn't it a secret?"
"Umu, I cannot let them get abused, they are our race's inheritance after all."
"I see, so the broken gate from before was your creation too huh."

Around here, there's one around Seryuu city. There should be a simple teleport gate for monitoring the dragon valley. There should be only one abandoned teleport gate in this continent. Since the teleport gate that was on the small country group near the Saga empire was completely destroyed without a trace, young humans can't possibly know it.

"May I hear where it leads to?"
"I'm sorry but I cannot say it. My brethren are ahead of this teleport gate, few in numbers they are. I cannot disclose it for the sake of their safety."

This teleport gate is also going to disappear soon. The hero will probably survive, but everything in the radius of several hundreds meters around this teleport gate will be ejected beyond the sub-space, and get annihilated. Farewell, Ro Han, Ri Fuu. Please forgive me for going to the samsara together with Ru Heu ahead of you.

The <<Overdrive Ray>> from the teleport gate fills the open space.
It abruptly disappears.

Death is quite disappointing.
Darkness and silence wrap this body.

"I'm sorry for ruining the mood, but since it was dangerous, I've dispersed the mana from the teleport gate. If I left it on rampage, it might affect not only this duchy capital, but even the royal capital, and this continent after all."

He's said that extremely easily, but dispersing mana from a rampaging teleport gate isn't a technique of human. Moreover, for him to recognize the destination of this teleport gate that I have protected with my life, regrettable.

"Right then, I'll vow with the name of hero, and the Parion god that I will not tell this to others."

To even promise in the name of god!
It's impossible for him to break the vow he's made in the name of his god. My see through skill also tells me that he's not lying. Let's believe on him, the hero, here.

This is how I meet Nanashi, the hero with a strange name.

While drinking the liquor and eating the snacks he has brought with relish, I begin to talk about the old story of the orcs after he begs for it. When I tell him that this sewer and the clean water facility are the heritages of orc, he exceedingly admires it. We even purposely go to the clean water facility for him to study the construction, what a diligent man. I begin to involuntarily talk like an old man about my various past successes, boastful stories, schemes, and even hardships. He listened to it to the end happily without looking tired. Truly a strange youth.

"However, what the wild boar king did is surely a crime. To fight the whole world that even drag its own race."
"It couldn't be helped, Nanashi. At that time, excluding our Orc empire, and the Saga empire, all demi-humans were enslaved by human. The wild boar king, despite knowing that he couldn't win, turned on the world, reduced the power of the human, and got annihilated by the hero."

The human at time that were ruling 90% of the world. When the ancient empire which controlled the majority of the world was destroyed, the orcs' battles were over. The wild boar king who had become the demon lord and couldn't maintain its ego probably marched toward the saga empire, which was the only empire that protected demi-human, to seek its own death.

I won't forget the sight of the hero who tried, until shedding tears of blood, to stop the death march of our brethren who had been manipulated by the five upper class demons. The hero ordered for the heavenly dragon's light breath with trembling voice while warped with crying voice. Exactly because he(?) found a nation that we didn't harbor our meaningless ambition, and lay dormant underground.

He left a single great sword as a proof of our friendship when he was leaving the duchy capital.

There is no inscription.

Thus, I will give it the name.

"■■ Name Order. Holy Sword 『Nanashi』"

We will hand down our treasure until the final moment when Orcs perish.

Intermission: Tenion Head Miko [First Part]

"Head miko-sama! It's terrible!"

Mou, what a hopeless child. To lack composure when he's going to be 40 like that, I think it's a bit problematic. Maybe I should better give him some stern advice now?
<TLN: The head miko talks like a playful woman in Japanese.>

"What's wrong, head priest. You are higher than me in the temple, so you shouldn't use 'sama' to call me."
"I'm sorry, head miko-sama. No, this isn't the time to talk about that!"
"Calm down. What's happened?"
"Miko-dono of Parion temple, and even of Garleon temple have been kidnapped by someone."

My, such thing.
Kidnapping the miko of oracle in the middle of demon lord season like this. There are seven miko who have received oracles in this duchy capital. They are Sera and me, head miko of Urion temple and Zaikuon temple, the apprentice miko of Heraluon temple, and the two kidnapped miko.

Normally, one would have sufficed, but last month, by duke-sama's order, every temple was to undertake an oracle for hints of the demon lord revival. Yet, instead of narrowing down the possible revival location, each temple received different response. Although it's normal for the details to be different between people who receive oracles depending on their gods, this is the first time the difference is this much.

My oracle points toward the duchy capital. If possible I want it to be a miss, but it's the same place as the prediction of the location of the demon lord revival 66 years ago. There is no mistake that the demon lord will be revived here. Before, there was a hero near me, but that person has left us, and gone back to the original world. No good aren't I, wishing for something that doesn't exist.

The oracle that Sera's received points to another continent. Even though

our oracles are from the same god, I wonder why do we receive different ones. For me to try guessing what the god is thinking, it's really not clergy-like at all isn't it.

Oh right, Sera!
This isn't the time to get lost in thoughts.

"Head priest, check the place where Sera is."
"Yes, head miko-sama!"

I admonish the head priest who have begun to run in a hurry to make him order other people for it. Mou, what are you doing being the gofer yourself. I ask the head priest to contact his excellency the duke if sera's whereabouts can't be confirmed. Since this child is flustered like this, he looks like he'll just collapse.

◇

Even though the priests have looked everywhere, Sera's whereabout is still unknown.
The matter about the three kidnapped miko have reached his excellency the duke too, and his knight and guard subordinates are searching the duchy capital even now. Although I haven't got the report from the bell tower, since I can see that the lights from the ships outside the harbor aren't moving, the harbor is probably blockaded. That's relieving.

However, since the opponents have defended against our detection magic, it looks like they have a powerful magician that can use advanced level magic, or a person who holds powerful artifacts. I wonder if it's that group who were spreading rumors about the end, [Wings of Liberty], that the priests had been talking about.

Sera, please come back safely.

I take the resurrection artifact that's hanging on my neck on my palm, and pour mana into it, even though I know that this is for nothing but a peace of my mind.

Not good, it's impossible to pour mana into the artifact when my heart is disarranged.

This isn't because I'm bad at using magic tools at all, but one needs delicate mana control to pour mana into an artifact. Like putting a thread to the pinhole of a needle on the ground from the top of a tower, that is how precise yet with a far off mind the work is. Having a disturbed mind is like sending wind to the hanging thread. There's no way the thread can get through the pinhole.

I'll use the forbidden mind magic to put my mind back at ease.
Tenion-sama, please give your protection to your believer.

◇

I woke up in my room that's begun sinking into darkness.

Looks like I've fainted.
It can't be helped with my age right. To faint while I was pouring mana into the resurrection artifact like this.

Fainted?
Losing consciousness in this consecration?

I can't believe it.
This place is near the sanctuary where ritual magic is held, and is filled with divinity. Even for an old woman like me, I'm just like a young woman--that's too exaggerated isn't it. Although I can move as well as a youngster, fainting in such place like this, maybe I don't have much time left.

I'm already 80 years old after all. It might be a good time to soon go on a journey to where my friends who had died earlier went.

I didn't notice it before when I was lost in such thought, but there's no shaking today is it. I'm glad that the tremors that had been assaulting the duchy capital for the past several days is gone. It was troubling to deal with

nobles who came almost everyday while asking "Is it going to be alright?" you know. Though since they're donating, the head priest doesn't seem like he has any complaint. I'd like to entrust the admonishment job to the high priest soon.

◇

I wonder if I'm really going senile.
There were many assassins who had intruded upon this sanctuary before, but this is the first time one has gotten so close. Wonder if my crisis perception skill is getting rusty?

While feeling dubious with the lack of thirst of blood from the intruder, I take the initiative to greet him.

"Ara, the assassin tonight is quite excellent."

The one who appears from the shadow as if gliding on the ground is a young boy wearing a white mask. There are two wrapped clothes in his shoulder--are those people? Is he an assassin who also happens to be a kidnapper I wonder?

I could see with [Status Check], but I couldn't see his name. Since I could see the name of the two people on his shoulder, it wasn't like the skill wasn't invoked. The two are the miko of Parion and Garleon who have been kidnapped together with Sera.

His level is 70 like the hero of Saga empire, but his title is [Saint]. He can't be called anything but abnormal to have such level at his age even though he's not the summoned hero of Saga empire.

Moreover, that [Saint] title. Although there are other people who have [Saintess] title like me, there shouldn't have been anyone with [Saint] title for the last 100 years here. I wonder who. I'd have consented if he had the title of hero instead.

"Nice to meet you, Yu Tenion Head Miko-dono. I am Nanashi."

"Hey, Nanashi-san. Won't you show your face. It's hard to talk with that mask."

I endure hard not to let my voice trembles.

Hey, what about Sera?

I want to ask that.
However, my intuition as a miko has told me. That child is already no more.

"Hey, Nanashi-san. Don't you know the whereabout of our kidnapped miko, Sera."
"I knew."

Ah, as I've thought.
That child has died isn't she. I can't, it's still to early to cry, for that child's sake. As a miko, I have to ask him now.

"Was the one who deprived Sera's life the humans of 『Wings of Liberty』? or-- the demon lord. That's right isn't it, Sera has been sacrificed for the demon lord."
"That's right."

Ah, I can't hold back my tears.
Even though I have to ask for the deployment of the saga empire hero, and even though I'm not sinking in sorrow, I can't stop my tears.

"Is that so, that child wasn't able to go against her fate."

Nanashi-san takes out a handkerchief out of somewhere and wipes my tears with it. Although he's wearing a strange mask, he's a gentleman isn't he.

I talked to him about the catastrophe that would befall this land while crying. In order to pull him as a war potential before the hero arrives here. He gave indifferent replies when he heard the story about the demon lord revival. Does it not feel real to him?　Or perhaps--he has already exterminated it?--That can't be right.

◇

"Yu Tenion head miko-dono, are you able to use resurrection magic?"
"Yes, I'm able to."

I answer Nanashi-san's sudden question.
He probably wants to bring me to where the Sera's body is, and use resurrection magic, but that's impossible. This resurrection artifact hasn't been filled with enough mana to be usable.

"What, that sort of things huh."

Nanashi-san took the resurrection artifact from my chest, and began to dazzlingly pour mana into it.

It's an unbelievable sight.
Doing the precise mana filling just like that. Normally you'd need one hour just to adjust the mana before you even begin to fill it.

However, he still has the body of human after all.
The amount of mana isn't something that can be filled by a person alone.
While this is happening, the 30 minutes after-death condition becomes the shackles and resurrection will be impossible.

"Excuse me for a bit."

Nanashi-san takes out a holy sword just like when he took the handkerchief earlier. It's accompanied by brilliant holy light that brighten this room as if it's daylight. Even though it's this bright, it a gentle light that doesn't hurt my eyes. I've never seen a holy sword with this much overflowing power. I can feel an order magnitude different in strength compared to the holy sword that my hero-sama wielded, Joyeuse.

But, what is it for?
I don't think that it's to hurt me. Just what on earth--

"I'll fill it up right away, so please excuse my discourtesy."

--Nanashi-san is absorbing the holy light from the holy sword as if pulsing. And then Nanashi-san pours mana into the artifact without looking agitated, like he's just breathing. Don't tell me, he's using his own body as an intermediary to transfer mana from the holy sword to the artifact?

Such absurd method doesn't exist even in fairy tales you know?

While I was taken aback by that absurdity, the mana filling on the artifact was over. Completing a process that'd have taken several years in just 10 minutes, I am speechless.

He's done so much already, I'll show him that I'll run fast to where Sera's body even if I have to whip out this old body.

As if ridiculing that determination, Nanashi-san summoned Sera's body right in front of me. He doesn't have summoning skill though? Did he summon without the skill I wonder. Maybe he used the infinite stowing (Inventory) like the hero.
No, he said that it's only been a few seconds since the death of Sera's body. Time passes even for the hero's Inventory. Perhaps it's fixation magic? No, that shouldn't be able to be used on living things or corpses.
Don't tell me, time magic? Even though it's a magic that only appear in fairy tales, it's mysterious that I feel that Nanashi-san could possibly use it.

The body of Sera which has appeared in front of me is beautiful without a single wound.
Nanashi-san who has noticed that the body is naked puts a cloth on it.

Rather than that, I have to concentrate now.
It'd be a disgrace as a woman if I wasted the miracles that Nanashi-san had created.

Intermission: Tenion Head Miko [Latter Part]

"Head miko-sama, I'm home."

Sera enters the sanctuary while looking livelier than ever. This child always looks happy, but it's rare for her to be this cheerful.

"What's happened Sera. Did you meet your lover?"
"I, it's not like that! Chevalier-sama isn't my lover."

This child is really bad at lying.
Since I was a bit interested, I asked about that chevalier person.

"There's this chevalier-sama who helped me with the food distribution, it felt like I had met him mysteriously, it's been on my mind. Right, he's a person with similar atmosphere to head miko-sama, tender, or rather, flexible, how should I put it--"

While hearing Sera speaks fondly of her love, I've had my suspicion that this chevalier person might be Nanashi-san from the other day, even though it's unfounded. I wonder if it's because I've been thinking about Nanashi-san all the time lately.

It's not a love at old age you know?

I received an oracle from the ceremony that I did at the dawn of that time that the demon lord who was supposed to revive in the duchy capital had been annihilated. Of course I immediately sent a messenger to duke-sama, but it can't be announced publicly yet since there are other temples' honors to consider. Of course, the king had promised that he would definitely announce it, so the announcement about the annihilation of the demon lord would probably be told during the kingdom conference in the spring.

"Head miko-sama, you look really happy about something you know? Did you get a lover?"
"Ufufu, I was just engrossed with thoughts about Nanashi."

It looked like she wanted to counter, but she's still soft huh. To be so upset about my joke. Ufufu, her heart is restless like she's really in love. When the demon lord season is over, it might be a good time for me to retire from head miko position soon.

I don't think that Sera will forget her duty, but let's give her a warning to keep the relationship at healthy scope just to be sure. A miko won't be able to receive oracles if she loses her virginity. It might be cruel for a teenage girl, but she has to wait until an oracle that states the demon lord season is over descends.

◇

I met Sera's lover--it might be better to call him a candidate of one--in the duke castle. He's really popular, and surrounded by girls. Ara ara, oh Sera. If you have such face, he'll laugh at you you know?

Still, what a nice smell. It's not just sweetness from sugar. I know that it's out of stock.

However, this voice.
It's exactly like Nanashi-san though. I wonder if he's his twin brother?
His level is half of Nanashi's, and even his skills composition is different after all. The things that are the same are his age, voice, and hair color, I guess his height is about the same too.

Since I was together with old acquaintances from Parion and Garleon temples who I had happened to meet across when I was congratulating Tisrad-sama for his wedding, I whispered him (Satou) leading words directly, but rather than getting shaken, he was perplexed instead. Looks like I was mistaken.

I might be thinking about Nanashi-san too much.
Ufufu, I shouldn't be one to make fun of Sera. I look like a maiden in love.

◇

"Good evening, head miko-sama."

He's really elusive isn't he.
How did he invade I wonder?　I didn't feel feedback from space magic, so I think it's not that.

"I've come here today to ask about the oracle regarding demon lord."
"Ara? You've annihilated it right?"
"It must have been defeated by a passing hero."

He wants to play dumb that it's not him to the end huh.

"You won't announce that the demon lord has been defeated?"
"I've told his excellency the duke directly, but the 『Annihilated』 oracle haven't come to the other temples, so we can't announce that the demon lord has been annihilated from Tenion temple alone."

Each temple is most likely questioning whether the [Each of the foretold demon lord] is annihilated, not the one in the duchy capital underground.

In other words, the demon lord season this time is not over yet--in that regards, the fact that the duchy capital is already excluded from that might be a small blessing. Thanks to Nanashi-san.

Just in case, I tell Nanashi-san about that, but he too has already expected it. He simply murmured, "So, it's like that after all." His atmosphere is like, "It's just demon lords, they can come at me no matter how many ." It's very fun to guess the invisible expression behind that mask.

Nanashi-san put the filled resurrection artifact on my neck. It's really amazing. I wonder if it's the prejudice of old age which make me thinks that the labor of nearly 20 years is fruitless.

"Thank you Nanashi-san."

However, I mustn't forget to thank you.

Although I asked him about chevalier Pendragon, he only replied, "That young noble who they call miracle chef right.", and he didn't seem to know the detail. I wonder if it's just my imagination that his "don't know" manner looks exactly like him (Satou's).

The [Indulgence] that I've prepared will become a waste if he (Satou) really is an acquaintance of Nanashi-san.

I wonder what'd happen if that third prince meets Nanashi-san?
I can't help but feel a bad premonition. I had hoped that the king didn't send such troublemaker during this difficult time.

It's not that is it.

That king shouldn't have been one to do such mistake. That unbending king should be able to predicts three moves ahead for sure.

I see, he's getting rid the nuisance the prince.
The king has predicted that the demon lord will appear on the labyrinth city. To push aside the prince to the uncertain element, the duchy capital. I have to complain directly to the king.

I don't know whether he'll accept it or not, but I will hand over the [Indulgence] to Nanashi-san in case he eliminates the third prince by mistake.

I actually wanted to give him the bell of Tenion, but I couldn't bring myself to since I was afraid I'd incur his displeasure. It's a bit unlike me isn't it.

◇

The world crisis came unexpectedly early.

Despair? I think that word is more hopeful than the scene right now.

At the duke castle seen from the sanctuary, the great monstrous fish (Tovkezeera) emerges from the huge summoning circle nearby. It's the

incarnation of destruction that brought about the deaths of many countries during the time of Yamato-sama. The aerial fortress that the great demon lord employed. I can't see the status since it's too far, but I can't let out words from its overwhelming presence.

Thinking that it'd be fine as long as Nanashi-san is here might be too optimistic of me.

I collapse on the sofa without even having the margin to worry about Sera who has gone out.
Several of the monster that can destroy the duchy capital alone appear from the summoning circle and swim to the arena.

Seven great monstrous fish.

Far from just Shiga kingdom, all the countries on this continent will disappear.

Ah, wonder if I have no choice but to call the heavenly dragon even if it means destroying the kingdom. It's the friend of Yamato-sama who's living on the range of mount Fuji. There's no choice but to use the dragon summoning crown (Fellow Crown) shining on the king's head that can be used to summon the dragon just once.

It's as if seven demon lords have appeared.

I want to rush to the arena to support them, but I have to be here. Since Nanashi-san most likely has filled the resurrection artifact as an insurance in case his friends die.

I watch over the end of duchy capital while patting the head of apprentice miko who are frightened. There's no meaning in taking shelter underground if it can cause damage over the defense magic of the sanctuary.

That is a flash.

When the light subsides, there are figures of severed great monstrous fish. Those are also dissolved as if the sky wipes them off. No, maybe I should say

that they disappear.

The sudden attack on the duchy capital disappear more abruptly than when it arrived.
It'a all too soon, no one even falls victim.

Nanashi-san, is that you I wonder.
I was convinced that was it as if I received an oracle.

Ah, Tenion-sama.
Thank you very much for sending that person to this land.

SS: Arisa and The Devil Box

Today we're having [Barbecues] on the courtyard of the mansion.

"Kuh, I can't have enough of the burning smell of the meat."
"Tarararari~""No desu!"

Tama-chan, I wonder if she was so happy, she couldn't say "Tamaranai". It sounds a bit like she's singing, it's really cute.
However, Liza-san who seriously watches over the meat with bones that are being grilled is a bit scary.
Since master had prepared a lot of meat skewers, everyone ate to their heart's content.

◇

Today's prototype is pudding.
It's very delicious, but since master keep getting dissatisfied with the [Caramel Sauce], he's having a hard time.

"U~n, no good. It's just sweet, there's no bitterness at all."
"Deliciouss."

Even though Mia-chan and me think that it's delicious, master and Arisa are still not satisfied. Oh Arisa, even though she's complaining, she still eats it all. Didn't she just have a showdown with Pochi-chan and the others with [Fried Rice] which she heavily consumed?

Since she's in her growth period, her appetite is big, but I wonder if it's fine to eat that much?

◇

I got praised by master when he saw the kombu that I had bought from the grocery on the downtown. I was hesitating since it was a bit pricey, but I'm glad that I've bought it. I will give my thanks to the shopkeeper who's

recommended it.
I mean, master not only praised me with a smile on his whole face, but he also [Hugged], and patted my head.

Ehehehe~, I won't wash my head in the bath today.

"Crab nabe is the best after all~ but, how'd you get this crab fork."
"Ah, I've made that one just now."
"Kuu, dang you cheat, but, you're forgiven. It doesn't feel right to eat crabs without this after all~."

Just as Arisa's said, it's easy to take the crab meat with this fork.
The crabs are delicious, but everyone is quiet. Mia-chan looks a bit lonely, but she's steadily eating the [Pilaf] that master has exclusively made for her.

"Mia, let me try a mouthful of the pilaf."
"Arisa, overeating."
"It can't be helped right, I have to with all these delicious things~♪"

Isn't she really eating too much?

◇

When Arisa sees the magic tool with a round board connected to a wooden box by a pole that master is carrying, she runs away from the room in full speed.
I was surprised. That Arisa can move so quick.

Pochi-chan and Tama-chan whom master had ordered came back to the room after they caught Arisa. To make Arisa become that unwilling, I wonder what is that magic tool? Since it's something that master's brought, I think it's not a bad tool.

"Then, Pochi is next."
"Yes, nano desu."

When she gets on that board, it looks like the needle on the disk moves.
Master scolded Tama-chan when she was going to touch the needle.

"It's a bit heavy, but I guess it's within the standard range. Since her race is different, there's no meaning to BMI, but I have to write down the body weight and the change."

Body weight is it?　I had never heard that word, but for some reason I took a step back as as soon as I heard it.

"Lulu, you're next."
"Y, yes."

I hesitated for a little, but then I jumped on it decisively.

"You don't have to be so forceful, be more gentler okay."
"Yes, I'm sorry."
"There's no need to apologize. Lulu is slightly lighter than the standard huh. I guess it's better if she eats a bit more meat and dairy products during meals."

I'm relieved that it looks like I've passed judging from master's expression.

"No~, I've promised my dead grandmother to never get on that devil instrument again~"

I thought Arisa's grandmother-sama had died even before she was born though?
Even though master has said, "Resign yourself and get on it", she's still resisting. In the end, master gets on the tool while carrying Arisa, checks the number, and puts Arisa down, then he gets on it again and checks the number.
At first I thought what is he doing I wonder?　I've thought such thing, but master is amazing, I've noticed that master is trying to find out the difference between the two measurements to get Arisa's body weight.

"Arisa."
"Uu, I've been sullied..."
"Noisy, you're slightly obese. From tomorrow on, you're forbidden from eating meat, and another helping. Of course snacks and sweets aren't allowed too."

That's why I've warned her that she was eating too much.
I wonder why do Pochi-chan, and even Tama-chan look like their life are over? Even Liza-san and Mia-chan are silently praying for Arisa.

"I'll accompany you with the diet, so let's make the goal to have you go down by five kilograms in one month."
"I, I hate diet~~~~~"

Arisa's sad screams is resounding in that afternoon.

Postscript.

Thanks to the [Non Calorie] dishes that master has prepared, Arisa's [Diet] transitions safely it seems.
I feel that Pochi-chan and Mia-chan who innocently cheer for her have become a bit plump too. I also have to be careful. Let's do the upping and stretching exercises like usual, no three times more than usual today!

Intermission: Mia and the Dietary Restriction

Human race food are delicious. They're really delicious you know.
But, they're very dangerous.

I've learned my lesson you know.

That was recently--

"Hamburg steak is the strongest nano desu."
"Yum yum~"
"I like something that's firmer, but it doesn't shade the tastiness of hamburg steak. It's truly delicious."
"Even though it's made of grounded beef, I wonder why is this so delicious~"
"Arisa, you're eating too much you know?"
"I'm on my growth period, I can't help it."
"Nn."

Satou has made hamburg steak from beans for me, it's for my sake you know?
I was always envious whenever I saw Pochi and the others eating hamburg steak so happily.

That's why I taste this hamburg steak one bite at a time.
I mean, it'd be wasteful if I ate it too fast right.

"Does it suit your taste?"
"Nn."

Mou, it's the best. I'm in bliss.
I don't know how is he able to make this delicious dish from beans. It's mysterious!
The grated daikon on top of the hamburg steak is a bit bitter, but it brings out the sweetness of the carrots. Of course it matches well with rice too you know?

◇

After the meal, I dive onto Satou's lap while feeling happy. I jumped you know?
Since the best place is already taken by Tama, I endure it beside her. But, but, I think it's not fair that it's always only Tama. I wonder if it's alright if I protest.

"It was delicious~"
"I want to eat again nodesu."
"Nn, delish."

Words of gratitude are difficult. It's also embarrassing if I talk long, I wonder if it's transmitted well? It did right.

"Arisa, you're going to get fat if you eat sweet things right after meal."
"It's a dessert. Sweet things go into another belly, so it's fine."

Arisa is amazing. She's still going to eat more even after eating that much!
Even Pochi and Tama are taking a bite from Arisa!
I wonder if all human and beastkin eat this much?
No, they don't. Lulu and Satou don't eat that much.

◇

"Fish are delicious, but you have to eat meat once in a while after all."

Arisa isn't a picky eater, she can eat anything, she's a good girl.

"Sweets go into another belly don't they. Yummy, crepes. Why is sampling food this delicious I wonder."
"Nn."

These many varying tastes, it's a wonder. Satou can use cooking magic. He must be. But, I think sampling is just for one biteful. If you eat the same

amount of shares as Arisa is eating, you won't be able to eat during dinner, it's true you know?

"Arisa?"

When we're changing our clothes, I call out to Arisa who hardens after she sees her own body.
I wonder what's wrong? I'm a bit worried.

"No~ well~ it's nothing. It's child's body right~. Yes, this is because of the child's body."

What is she persuading herself for? I wonder if she's not? However, she looks like that.

"It's finally, finally here, sponge cake! Hey hey, it has to be with fresh cream and strawberries after all right! Kuuh~ to be able to eat cakes even in this world, truly a bliss."

She really likes it. She does, doesn't she.
Eating half of that big cake alone.

I stop to reflect when I taste it for a mouthful, I mean, it's so delicious! It's too delicious.
Afterwards, everyone is eating greedily. I mean, it's delicious.

◇

"Everyone, get on this one by one."

Satou brings some kind of magic tool that looks like a box, or rather, a stand. When I get on it, the needle attached on the side is spinning, round and round. I want to touch it, but since Tama was scolded for trying to touch it, I endure it. I endured it you know?

Arisa grimaces when she sees the stand. I wonder why?

"No! I've bid farewell to that devil instrument in my past life! I've promised in my heart to never get on it again."

Arisa refuses with all her might. She hates it so much.
However, she gets on it after Satou unusually [Order] her. Arisa is saying, "Clothes! My clothes must have been heavy!", but that clothes are made of thin cotton, it's very light you know? It's as light as a feather.

Satou tells Arisa with words that I've never heard before. I wonder what obese is? It's on my mind.

"Arisa, snacks are forbidden until you lose 5 kilograms. I'll take off deep fried stuffs from the menu."
"Nyu! Fried stuffs are gone, for everyone~?"
"W, wait a minute nodesu! Fried stuffs are essential nano desu!"
"I feel sorry for Arisa if it's only her, so I'll change the menu to stuffs with less fat."

Fat? The decrease of oily stuffs is to my liking.
But, Pochi and Tama look heart-broken. "Pochi~""Tamaa", they're hugging with pitiable voices. Liza is also looking at the sky as if enduring something. Is it hard I wonder?

But, it seems necessary to cure Arisa from her plumpness. Satou said so.
I think her plump stomach looks cute, is it a sickness I wonder? It's a sickness isn't it.

Let's all cooperate together to cure Arisa's plumpness.
Do your best, Arisa. I'm cheering on you, do your best.

"I hate diet~~~~"

How long does Arisa's scream continue to echo.
This is the first time I know that delicious meals can be dangerous.

Satou, you're a dangerous person aren't you.

Intermission: Hime Miko

"Ringrande!"

Voice of a young girl echoes in the spacious private room.

"Ringrande!"

A girl is slapping the cushion she's carrying to the sofa as if she's spitting out her black emotion inside.

"Riin, graaan, de!"

With the strength of a powerless girl, she only makes light sounds, "poof", and the waterfowl feathers don't even fly out.
She probably doesn't normally exercise, the girl runs out of breath after only swinging the cushion for a few minutes.

A muffled laugh leaked out of a boy then.

"Who!"

The girl's anger is revived along with the settling of her rough breath. That is because she had ordered the maids in this room to clear out of this room before she began acting violently.

"You're in a bad mood huh, Sera."

The one who comes out of the shadow while smiling is the girl's (Sera's) older brother, Tisrad Oyugock. The name of the one whom Sera was screaming about since earlier is of the two's older sister.

"Tisrad-niisama! Entering without making a sound is rude."
"Sorry."

The boy who is smiling kindly eludes the threatening attitude of Sera like a willow tree. He seems a bit mature for his 10 years old age.

"You were calling Rin-anesama, what's happened? Did you hear some backbiting from gossiping maids again?"

He seems to have hit the nail on the head, Sera puffs her reddening cheeks, and turns away. She normally seldom shows such childish actions, but it's not that rare in front of her brother, Tisrad.

"Humph, it's just like usual--

『Hey, hey, did you hear?　Ringrande-sama has restored the lost magic they said!』
『You've just heard that old story now?　This time she led the holy knights and exterminated the floor master of the labyrinth under the labyrinth city! The proof is with the lightning magic sword she's obtained you know?』
『Oh my, I wonder just how many hundreds of gold coins is a magic sword from a labyrinth? She's really amazing~』

--they said. Furthermore, in the end they said, 『Compared to her, Sera-sama is normal isn't she』. Don't you think that it's none of their business? I know that myself already!　Only the younger sister of a genius older sister knows the hardship of having a genius as an older sister!"

The boy smiles bitterly while listening to his little sister who mimics the maids voices. That is because he has just heard similar talks with the position of his sister replaced with himself from the butlers and the maids. Therefore he purposely came here to cheer his sister up who must be in the same circumstance.

He's really just cheering for his little sister. He's not a wimp who licks each other's wounds. If he is like that, in the future he won't be able to unite the foolish, sly old nobles who are spanning over this vast territory passed down from his grandfather and father.

"Sera, stop comparing yourself with nee-san. That person is special. She's a great woman who will stand alongside people who leave their marks in history like ancient king Yamato, and the wise of restoration, Ozara-sama. If you compare yourself to a huge tree, you'll only lament your shortcomings."

"Uu~, I know that, but! It's not about the theory!"

They're not words that should have been said by a mere 7 years old, but Sera, who is far smarter than other children of her age, understands what her brother is saying. Yet, her child heart cannot admit that it's right.

"If you're always angry, wrinkles will appear on your forehead you know? Don't complain to me if a boy you like in the future dislikes you for that."
"H, humph. I'll have ani-sama make me your bride if that happen, so it's fine!"

Sera rubs her forehead even while saying abusive words--although it's slightly cute--to her elder brother. Her young girl's mind seems to be growing quickly.

◇

"Baptism?"
"Yeah, the head miko of Yu Tenion will do it personally."
"Hee, that's amazing. I'm glad for you, Sera. To be baptized by the Saintess of Salvation-sama, isn't it due to father's request?"

The [Saintess of Salvation] is the second name of Yu Tenion head miko which she's gained from her role as the follower of hero, and her [Saintess] title. She rarely ever do baptism due to her old age. In fact, the one who baptized the heir of this dukedom, the boy Tisrad, and lady Ringrande, wasn't her, but the head priest. Although, since the head priest is technically higher ranked than her, it is unreasonable to complain about it.

Sera is having a smile on her whole face while being hugged by her father and older brother.

She likes being special.
Since her older sister is too excellent, most special things went to her sister after all.

After three weeks of preparation, Sera proceeds toward the Tenion temple

accompanied by her older brother. Normally the rite is held in the worship room inside the castle, but in order not to be discourteous to the head miko, the baptism rite is to be held in the sanctuary inside the Tenion temple.

"You are Sera right."
"Y, yes. Head miko-sama."

Sera is ashamed for being unladylike by using loud voice since she's too nervous. The head miko gently brush Sera's head and whispers "Raise your head, being cheerful is a wonderful thing you know?" close to her ear. It's unimaginable how that gentle-looking figure fought the demon lord together with the hero.

Head miko hugs Sera on her lap until she calms down while gently brushing her hair. After confirming that Sera isn't nervous anymore, she takes her hand and leads her to the rite magic circle.

"Listen, think about your favorite person during the rite."
"Is it alright for me not to pray to the god?"
"Yes, calm your heart and think about your favorite person, that warm feeling will reach the god."

This is the head miko's method, it is not the official teaching of Tenion temple. Normally, you only have to make her stand on the magic circle, chant the baptism spell, and it's over.

"Have you imagined your favorite person?"
"Yes, head miko-sama."
"Ufufu, I wonder who's on your mind. Is it your future husband?"
"I, it's not. Sera won't be getting married."
"Ara ara, do you want to become a miko?"
"Yup, Sera, will become a miko!"

Sera speaks like a child as head miko teases her to lure it out. Of course, she doesn't notice it herself. It's as if memories of her playing around with her older sister when they were children went adrift.

"Ufufu, ■■ ■■■ ■■ Baptism (Initiation)"

As if responding to head miko's spell, the magic circle releases warm blue light. Little blue lights that rise from the magic circle happily dance around Sera as if blessing her. Lightly, as if a little fairies coming out of the fairytale.

One light among them disappears as if inhaled to Sera's chest, and the rite is over.

"Open your eyes. Miko of Oracle, Sera."
"Yes."

The head miko suddenly changes to dignified tone unlike the kind old woman before, and Sera replies to that with slightly transparent voice. The head miko can see the [Oracle] gift, and the [Tenion Miko] title on her.

People who receive gift from the baptism rite are extremely rare, but they do exist. However, there is no precedent of someone receiving oracle gift (from the rite) even in the long history of Tenion Temple at the duchy capital.
As a proof, everyone on the surrounding beside the head miko and Sera are hardened in their initial postures from when the rite begins as if they can't follow the situation. They need quite a bit of time before they can move again.

◇

"Sera Oyugock, will you leave the house of Oyugock and serve on Tenion's side?"
"Yes, head miko-sama."
"Then, from now on, you are just Sera. Now, stand up Sera. Tenion temple welcomes you."

After the formality dialogs are over, the girl throws away the wealth and social position of the daughter of Oyugock's house, and enters into miko apprenticeship of Tenion temple.

There was no one who objected, including the girl herself. Among the people in this duchy capital--the 200.000 of them, there are only seven, and

among the more-than 700.000 people in the whole duchy, there are only nine people who have [Oracle] gifts, and in order for those gifts to be nurtured with the techniques owned by the temples in certainty, there is no choice for them but to live in.
Although it has some limit, this [Gift] has power to ask a question directly to the god. This is the only mean to receive divination about great disasters from the god.

Therefore, the training of miko of oracle are fierce.

◇

"Sera, Relena, Roza, line up here. Listen, you're safe as long as you are inside that magic circle. Do not lose your composure."

The three girls are clad in different kinds of miko clothes. Each have symbols that signify Tenion, Parion, and Garleon sewed on the clothes.

Relena, and Rouza are nine years old, one year younger than Sera. They're girls who became miko one year after Sera. The two are Sera's blood relatives, they are [Special] girls who have [Oracle] gifts since birth.

This place is a secret graveyard that's shared by the joint of seven temples in the duchy capital.
It's a secret place that only extremely few people know even among the temples.

"Kyaa."
"Oh, god."
"Kuh."

On the other side of the magic circle, several undeads are creeping out from the depth of a wide wide passage blocked with iron bars.
It's a nightmarish scene as if the door to the afterlife has opened.

"Calm down, miko apprentices"
"Now then, put these vengeful ghosts to sleep peacefully."

"Chant it, the edict of blessing!"
"""Blessing!"""

The girls strengthen their backs, and wipe their fear with the words of the guarding priests.

"■■■ Bless"
"■■◆ Bless"
"■◆■ Bless"

However, these young girls fail the most basic magic due to their extreme mental strains. Beside Sera, the two have failed their impatient chanting.

"Calm down. Relena, and Roza, you two chant again. Sera, stand by."

After several failings and rebukes from the instructor priest, they finally succeed the chanting. As if ridiculing the girls who feel relieved, the undeads from the other side of the iron bars are throwing their detached arms and feelers noisily. Bless only gives minimal damage to the undeads.

However, that's quite enough.

"■■ Purification (Turn Undead)"

After several purification magic from the high priest who is waiting nearby, the undeads finally stop moving and go back to just being corpses.

Enormous experiences from defeating countless undeads flow to the three girls and the high priest. The pain from the rapid growth assaults their bodies as if tearing it. The girls hug their bodies who's having rapid growth (level up), and writhe in agony on the floor. That pain is the proof of growth, they cannot use healing magic as it will disturb the growth.

Those girls don't know.

The priests have used forbidden spell to produce these undeads in order to quicken their growths.

From now on, they have to undergo this secret ritual for many times.

And then, the girls who have grown up receive the oracle.
The future is harsh.

Oh god.
I pray that the future of humanity and the girls, the unfortunate event—

Intermission: Sera

There are unfamiliar men on the place where my uncle's invited me. Ah, even though I've been warned about this, am I stupid for believing my relative.

I was kidnapped and made to swallow an egg-like something. I blocked my throat and tried to vomit it out many times, but they forced me to swallow some kind of medicine, and I lost consciousness then.

The next time I open my eyes, a familiar ceiling, and the face of head miko-sama comes to my view. I'm also right for thinking this place is familiar, since it's the sanctuary of Tenion temple here.

I tried asking the details of the incident, but since the head miko-sama told me, "Everything is already over. There is already no one that will harm you.", I fell asleep as if I was leaving my body to head miko-sama that day. It's like I'm a child, it's a bit embarrassing.

◇

I had a dream that night.
A dream about me talking about something with a man wearing a silver mask. The one who's talking with the tone of voice I've never heard before is certainly me. But, why am I naked. Ah, if you swing your arms that much. If this wasn't a dream, I would have jumped off the top of a tower.
Ah, I'm even sitting with one knee up while being naked...

I'm in agony of embarrassment inside my dream.

◇

There has never been a day where I cannot wait to wake up from sleep like this day.
It's too much even for a dream.

It can't be helped if I get depressed. Let's renew my mood and work hard.
First, it's the morning duty!

"Ah Sera. You've been instructed by head miko-sama to not use magic for 4-5 days. Please help with the food distribution for a while."
"Yes, chief miko-sama."

Taking out the wind out of my sail all of a sudden.
It's really regrettable.

◇

Mou! It's terrible today.
There are always people coming and causing trouble during the food distribution, but just how many times are they going to disturb us until they're satisfied. It seems that they usually act like that during the tournament, but this year, due to the demon lord season coupled with the strange group [Wings of Liberty] spreading preposterous rumor, they're venting their excessive anxiety with violence.

The aunty who were helping with the distribution got hurt when she was washing her face. I can heal her bodily injuries, but I cannot do that to the wounded heart. I can only calm her down at most.

If a lizardkin woman called Liza and a little girl called Arisa didn't help to subdue the quarrel, the food distribution might have been canceled today. Since there are a lot of children who depend their life from this food distribution, I didn't want to cancel it.

"Thank you, we're saved."
"It's nothing, even master would surely tell us to help people in trouble."

Master?

I asked that girl called Lulu out of curiosity, turned out the girls are slaves of a honorary noble. Aren't they looking too neat for slaves?
I wasn't only surprised by their neat appearances, but the apparent lack of degenerate impressions that slaves usually have. I can't believe these girls who look so cheerful and free from worry are slaves.

As I was distributing the food, I listened about their master from the girl called Lulu. It's as if he's her lover--no, it's as if she's talking about her unrequited love, that kind of pure love. For someone who cannot fall in love like me, I feel slightly, yes, only very slightly envious.

I wonder that's why?

When I met their master--chevalier Pendragon, it didn't feel like the first time.

"Um, we've met somewhere haven't we?"

I involuntarily said such thing, I add another words in a hurry to varnish over it.

"No, this is the first time we've met. Sera-sama."
"Is it so I wonder..."

But, it feels strange when it's denied. Are we really not acquainted?
I feel like I've seen him somewhere.

I can't remember.

"Sera-sama, the people are tired of waiting for the food."

Err, did I perhaps keep staring at chevalier-sama's face?
It's embarrassing. If head miko-sama finds out about me staring at a man in public, she'll scold me. No, that person will surely teases me happily.

It seem chevalier-sama is the master of Lulu and the others, he's helping with the works of the aunties who are commoners without putting on air.

"You're pretty good despite being a noble. If you don't succeed your house,

how about working in our shop? I'll let my daughter becomes your bride."
"N, no, you can't."

Even though the aunty was just playing around like always, I was surprised at my own reflexive reaction. When my eyes meet with Lulu-san who's said the same things, I start laughing.

I mean, for some reason laughter fill my heart.
This is the first time my heart is excited like this.

Even though he helped even until the clean-up, since I was surprised with the sudden arrival of Rin-anesama, I wasn't able to say thank you.

I wonder if he thought of me as a rude girl?

◇

The second time we met was when I went to the ball in the castle to congratulate Tisrad-oniisama's wedding.

However, I wonder what is this irritated feeling.

I wonder why is my heart feels irritated when I see chevalier-sama getting surrounded by younger girls.

"It's been a while, Satou-sama."

I don't know myself why am I calling chevalier-sama with his first name. I feel the gazes of the girls around chevalier-sama vigorously gather at me, is this person perhaps popular?

That can't be it right?

I unintentionally thought of a rude thing, but I understood the reason after I ate the snacks that he had made. A snack this delicious. Even though the castle's head chef is excellent, I feel that this snack is incomparable.

I feel happy with every bite.

It's such feeling.

When I see chevalier-sama dances with the girls, I feel the irritated feeling from earlier gets even stronger. Maybe I should invite him to a dance?

"You're quite popular aren't you, Satou-sama."

Ah, even though I didn't intend to speak with sarcasm.
Yet, he replies with a misdirected criticism of himself. That was funny, and made me involuntarily laughed. It looks like he strangely assesses himself low.
However, even though he's kind, he's unexpectedly mean. Even though I plead him to stop adding [Sama], I couldn't quite get his consent. Even though I rarely ever do such thing.

Oh right, he's not just skillful at cooking, but at dancing too.

◇

"Did something good happen? Satou-san."
"Yes, some difficult works have been going well."

Satou-san keeps the promise he's made during the ball, and he's been helping with the food distribution several times after that. And at last, we've started calling each other with "Satou-san", and "Sera-san", without the "Sama" at the last distribution. Since everyone at the temple calls me with "Sama", I've always yearned for friends that call me without honorifics.

Fufu, it's only a matter of time before we call each other without honorifics.

I, it's not like I want us to become lovers.
I'm a miko after all!

◇

That's right, Satou-san resembles Tisrad-niisama.
The way he always doesn't forget to smile, the way he eludes women, or the way he looks troubled yet never raises his hands when I'm mad at him.

I wonder if I've been lonely since I seldom meet niisama after I've become a miko.
It's like, I'm a child.

I received two tickets for the diva performance from Tisrad-niisama, so I gathered my courage and invited Satou-san, but he accepted it cheerfully. He said, "I've been wanting to see it" at face value, but I'm frustrated. Why didn't he look a bit more embarrassed.

The diva's song seemed to be wonderful.
I'm sorry, even the wonderful song only passes through my ears.

Because!

The seats that niisama has given for this performance seem to be for lovers, there's practically no gap between us?! It's the first time I've ever been this close to a male beside niisama, my heart is thumping as if it'll burst out.

Satou-san is like usual, he only smiles back even when our eyes meet, and completely doesn't look like he's nervous. I think it can't be helped that it makes me want to pinch his unruffled cheeks. Of course I only think that inside my mind, I can't possibly actually do it.

As we're sitting this close, I feel like something deep inside my body is being pulled to Satou-san. It's as if cogs that have been put together, something in my heart tells me that this is my place, yes, it's as if my soul is attracted, it's that kind of mysterious feeling.

I wonder if this is what the my colleagues at the temple call love.
But, I think it feels a bit different.

Even though my own feeling is clear, I might be a coward.

◇

I wonder why does he have slaves?
I thought that he was someone who couldn't believe other people, but he doesn't look like that at all. When I see Pochi-chan and the others, they look like they're really cherished, and I don't think he can't afford to employ servants.

"Ah, it was because I protected these girls that had lost their master in the labyrinth, and took them along to the above ground."
"F, from the labyrinth?"
"Yes, if master wasn't there, we, who didn't know how to fight, would only become preys of the monsters in the labyrinth."
"Peerless and wonderful~?"
"Master is the strongest nanodesu!"

Because of that, everyone trusts Satou-san that much don't they.

"I was going to free them after we left the labyrinth, but they didn't like it...."
"I will serve master until I can repay the favor."
"Goetsushudon?" "Chain taxi nanodesu."

I don't quite understand what Tama-chan and the others are saying, but I wonder if they are more like servants than slaves.
<TLN: 'Goetsushudon' is meant to be 'Goetsudoshu'. Chain taxi = 'Ichiren Takushii', she meant to say 'Ichiren Takusho'. Both are Japanese proverbs that mean, effectively, together till the end.>

"As for us, we've been bound with 『Geass』 by an evil magician. Even if we're going to be released, it'll only get canceled."

[Geass] she said?
There's no one who can use it even in the duchy capital. It might be released with the prayer magic toward god, but since the compensation is too big, head miko-sama will probably refuse even if I ask.

"Sera-san, will you let me know if you know any way to release the 『Geass

』?"
"There's this holy magic called 『Prayer(Wish)』. That magic might be able to release it, but the compensation is too big."
"The compensation is?"
"T, that is...."

I reflexively fumbled the words.
The degree of compensation for [Wish] can change. Since sometimes it shrinks your life span by 10 years, it's also possible for it to use up all your life.
Maybe Satou-san had realized it after seeing me hesitating, he didn't ask more after that.

◇

"There is you know?"
"Eeh?"

Head miko-sama easily replied in affirmation when I asked about it.

"Zazaris, the pope of Parion temple should be able to release 『Geass』. I can also do it, but it's impossible for two people. My life would have ran out after I released one of them."

However, I couldn't tell Satou-san about this. I mean, if pope Zazaris, the one they call [Avarice] knows of a great person like Satou-san, he will surely not overlook him. I'm sorry for Arisa and Lulu, but please wait until the time I can use the prayer magic.

They won't have to wait for long.
In 10 years, no within 5 years, I will reach the supreme top without fail.

At the dawn of the time those girls are liberated, I will surely—

SS: Orion and Rumor

A letter comes from father who had lost contact with me for a long time.

I'm told that due to a demon, the baron territory was on verge of collapse. At that time, thanks to a merchant and his escorts who had just arrived at Muno city, the territory escaped destruction.

Can mere escorts of a merchant fight a demon?
Isn't father being deceived by that merchant?

That suspicion only became deeper when I heard that father had conferred honorary peerage to that merchant.

◇

Nina Rottol? I don't know the name, but she seems to be a honorary noble who has become the consul according to the same letter from father.

Since she's just a honorary viscount, she's probably satisfied with becoming a subordinate of a broke noble, but her rank as a noble is higher than father's. Even if a territory lord is treated like an earl, I can't imagine why would she become a baron's subordinate.

"Nina Rotol? Don't tell me, the Blood and Iron Nina?"
"No, it's Rottol the Orc Eater right?"
"Is that really true? Wasn't she the mistress of the next duke?"

Even though I just lightly mentioned her name, all of my friends in the same grade seemed to recognize her. If she's a famous person, I think it'd be better for her to find a job in the duchy capital.

◇

A letter has arrived from Soruna-anesama.
Foolishly, she says that she's engaged with a commoner in the letter.

This can't be.

Father is a baron. Moreover, he's a lord of a territory. He's treated like an earl at least, yet why isn't she marrying a noble, but a commoner instead.

I send a passionate letter about the prides and responsibilities of a noble back to Soruna-anesama. It'd be good if she corrects her conduct with this.

◇

A letter from consul Rottol has arrived.

It seems that that upstart honorary chevalier merchant has fallen in love with Karina-anesama. A mere upstart honorary chevalier wanting to make the daughter of his master into his wife, there's a limit even for forgetting your standing.

She wishes for me to mediate between the two, in the letter, that's outrageous.

Perhaps that consul Rottol is trying to hijack the baron territory using that honorary chevalier?

Father is someone that can't doubt a person.

I have to do something to unmask that chevalier's true nature.

◇

I met the honorary chevalier for the first time at the evening party of the

invitation from the duke-sama with father as a proxy. He's been trying to directly meet me up until now, but I've always refused it with suitable reasons.

"My name is Satou Pendragon. Delighted to make your acquittance."
"Umu, I'm Orion Muno. Chevalier Satou, be at ease."

Fumu, his face looks like the antithesis of ambition, but they say that all swindlers look like good people. I must not be deceived.

The next day, I've heard about the deeds of that honorary chevalier from my friends. He intrudes upon the house of the girls he's met during the evening party under the pretext of doing tea party, and proposes to everyone without minding who is it.

What the heck!

I have to protect Karina-anesama by any means.
I won't let her be used by that man as long as she's in the duchy capital.

I grasp my fist tightly, and swear to the setting sun that encroaches my room.

SS: Pochi and Scary Thing

"Pochi, would you like to hear a nice story?"
"That face is a bad face nanodesu. Arisa is going to trick Pochi nodesu."
"No~way, I won't do such thing you know?"

Arisa talked about some great thing nodesu.
I can say goodbye to the fish life with this nodesu.

"Master! It's terrible nanodesu."
"What's wrong?"
"Um, um, yes, Pochi is scared of meat nodesu."
"Hee, that's terrible."
"What if you're shown grilled meat?"
"I'd be so scared, I'd collapse nano desu."

I cover my face with my hands, and do my utmost best to do 'I'm scared' appeal, just like Arisa's told me nodesu.

"Then, what if you're shown steak?"
"I will scream and faint nodesu."

This time I put my arms on my head and squat down.

"I see~, it's terrible for Pochi huh."
"Yes nanodesu, it's terrible nanodesu."

Master is laughing just like Arisa's said.
There are going to be a lot of meat tonight nanodesu!

I mean, I can whiff the nice burning smell of the meat nodesu~♪
I'm excited with the anticipation of the dinner nano desu!

"Delicious~"

"It's tasty, master."

Huh? Huh? Wait a minute nano desu.
It's strange desuyo?

Even though there are steak on everyone's plate when I look around, on Pochi's plate it's.

"Why is it a grilled fish nanodesu?"
"Pochi's said that meat are scary, so I make it a fish for you. You should have said it sooner."

Master is smiling while laughing. I feel slightly happy, but that's not it.
When I was being flustered while holding the plate, Arisa called out with a bad smile on her face nodesu.

"What's wrong Pochi? Fish are also delicious you know?"

A, Arisa, you've tricked me after all nodesu.

"Alright, since Pochi might be scared of tea too, here's the water."

Master passes a cup of water while giggling. Earlier, I've already said the punchline that Arisa taught me nodesu.

I have neither dream or ingenuity nodesu.

When I was staring at fish-san while slumping, Lulu traded the plate with the one with steak.

"Mou, master, and also Arisa are playing around too much with Pochi-chan since she's cute."
"Sorry, Lulu, it just happen."

Meat, meat nanodesu!
When I look around while surprised, everyone nods nodesu.

"Master, is it alright to eat them?"
"It's alright, eat a lot."

This time, I tell master normally that, "I want to eat meat nodesu."
And also, Lulu, thank you nanodesu.

SS: Christmas

Funfunfu~ Funfunfu~ Funfunfun, fu, fu~

"Arisa is disgusting nodesu."
"Are you awright~?"

Mumumu, how rude!

"I'm just preparing for Christmas."
"Kuisuasu?"
"Is it fun nodesu?"

Gununu. Unpleasant memories from the past comes into my mind.... Calm down Arisa. Today you're having a Christmas with your beloved person aren't you. Although it's not just the two of us, the god of fortune rarely ever gives this much service for me, so I have to enjoy it.

"It's fun you know. You eat on a feast, and everyone plays together."
"Like usual~?"
"Everyday is a Christmas nano desu!"

No, that is true, but it's different.
Kuh, the magic of bullet list is obstructing me!

"During the Christmas, a person wearing red clothes called Santa-san delivers presents."
"Purezento~?"
"Something like a gift."
"Meat nanodesu?!
"Whale karaage is nice nodesu!"

Ah~, that was delicious~
Oops, I've been taken in by these two's paces.
If it stay like this, I won't make it in time to prepare the Santa cosplay.
Alright, let's kill two birds with one stone.

"However, you see, only good kids receive the presents."
"Tama is a good kid~"
"Pochi is also a good kid nanodesu!"
"Ara, is that really so? Even if you think yourself a good kid, other people might not think the same you know?"
"Unyu~"
"I, it's not like that!　Arisa is mean nanodesu!"
"Bad kids, you see"

I cut my words, and attract the two's attentions.

"Black Namahage wearing bla~ck clothes will come"

I gradually lower my voice for the play.
Waiting for when the two hold their breath.

"Are there bad kidds here~!!"
"No bad kid~!"
"Pochi and Tama are good kids nanodesu~~"

I shouted loudly while raising both my hands, and the two went downstairs while screaming toward the room where master and the others are.
Yep, they're good kids who are worth to tease at.

◇

As an apology for scaring them at the daytime, I present Pochi and Tama with socks.
When I teach them that they will get presents from Santa-san if they leave it on their bedsides, they hang the socks while looking really happy.
Mia is also hanging the over-the-kneesocks that she usually wears, but those are thin, so they'll stretch if you put presents into it you know?

The four people are lying on the bed, and sleep happily.

◇

"Ara? It seems Arisa has also fallen asleep."
"Then, let's put the presents and go back."
"Yes."

So Arisa won't participate in the Christmas night performance.
Even though I've prepared a magic tools that play moody music, Hors D'oeuvre, and adult-like tablewares, unfortunately.

While healing myself by looking at the four who sleep happily, I quietly close the bedroom door.

Intermission: Night of the Party

Satou's here. I feel that I spent a lot of Christmas in the office after I had become a working adult. If March wasn't the end of the fiscal year, maybe I could have passed the end of year more relaxedly.

◇

"Master, Arisa is looking strange."

Arisa has always been strange though, but since it's Lulu who's saying it, she must be even stranger now.
When I look at the place Lulu points to, Arisa is humming a parody of Christmas songs, like "Siilent night", "loonely night", questionably in a dark room while staring at the fireworks afar.
Did something happen that stimulated her past trauma?

"Looks like she's remembering something unpleasant, so let's leave her alone."
"Y, yes..."

To relieve Lulu who's worrying about her little sister, let's hold a fun Christmas party and overwrite Arisa's bad memories.

◇

"What is it, so suddenly? There are no Christmas or Valentine over here you know?"

Arisa seems like she's rebounded but since she murmurs, "Riajuu, serves you right", looks like there's still some lingering effect.

"Is that so, I thought that the past heroes had spread them."
"Christmas is just an urban legend. Just like there's no Tsuchinoko here, there's also no Christmas here! QED, conclusion!"

No, that's very forced y'know? It can't be completely proved in the first place.
Well, it's fine.

"I've thought of holding a feast, and do something that's Christmas party-like, but I guess I should not."
"Feas～?"
"Meat festival nanodesu?"
"Fruits festival."

The youth troop reacted to the feast word.

"Are there going to be a roasted whole turkey, champagne? Is there going to be (fried) chicken with bone too?"
"I've never seen a turkey, but there are chicken-like birds, so I'll make them if you're fine with it."
"Yahoo! Then, I also have to make Christmas outfits! Do expect mini skirt Santa!"

It might just be a bravado, but it seems she's become a bit more energetic.

◇

"Master, about the lulu fruits that we're going to use to make the cake--"

According to Lulu, ever since the wedding of Tisrad-shi, the fruits are always sold-out. Erina and Talna pair who I've asked to help Lulu carry ingredients are slumping on the chairs after using up all their strength.
I guess I should directly ask viscount Emlin to get the fruits. It'll be awkward since I've declined his daughter's marriage proposal, but but the viscount probably wasn't serious anyway, so it's fine right.

"I'll do something about that. I want Lulu to make the sponge cake, can you

do it?"
"Yes! I've trained intensively, so I'm fine."

Lulu is a hard worker. I'll entrust Lulu with the preparation for the cakes and the cookings, and borrow the maids of baron Muno for the parts that can't be done alone. They should be able to at least peel potatoes.

◇

"Chevalier-sama!"
"Heya, Lina-sama, it's been awhile."

The second daughter, Lina, greeted me in the house of viscount Emlin.
The viscount offered me with Lina's hand in marriage the other day as a thank for making the value of lulu's orchard instantly rises right. No matter how you looked at it, I felt sorry for her to be married with a countryside lower rank noble, so I properly refused it.

I praised her new dress until viscount Emlin came to the parlor. She had told me that her dress from before was her mother's, so maybe it's because she was happy for her new dress that she was turning around happily when I praised it.

"Hou? Christmas party is it?"
"I've found it written on an ancient document when I was researching for the cuisines of the ancient king Yamato's era. When I inquired it to hero-sama the other day, he informed me that it was a festival in hero-sama's birthplace, so I want to try reproducing it."

I'll use Hayato as an excuse for this occasion. He doesn't live in the duchy capital anyway, and he should be busy, so they won't suspect that it's just a random talk.
For now, after we've discussed about it, they're going to let me have some Lulu fruits. It seems that he's instructed the orchard's caretakers to harvest the best fruits. He's kind like always.
When I was idling in the viscount's mansion, I told Lina as a lip service, "Please come to the party if it's fine with you." Lady Karina and the others

are going to be there anyway, the more the merrier for a party.

◇

Next, I head toward the ingredient market in front of the harbor.
I'm searching for rare fruits for Mia's fruits festival, and vegetables to color the dishes.

"Masta!"
"Nana, there's masta."

When I turn toward the source of the lisp voices, there is Nana who's carrying sea lionkin children on both hands. For some reason, Sera is also behind her.

"Hello, Sera-san."
"Good day, Satou-san."

As always Sera begins to smile sweetly when our eyes only meet.
However, there shouldn't be food distribution today, I wonder what's happened?

"Yes, I was doing some errands, so I came here, and happened to catch sight of Nana-san."
"Seera, masta listening to."
"Nana, masta's lover?"
"I have cross-examined my relationship with master, I announce that it's a relationship between a master and his attendant."

Sera is gesturing them to stop talking with a reddened face, but it's probably impossible to expect these three to read the mood.
However, I think miko-san isn't allowed go out with the opposite sex, but I guess she's at that age, so she's interested with such talk.

I keep Sera company with the nonsensical chatter as she's trying to change the subject. I invited Sera to the Christmas party while we were at it.

◇

When I was on my way back, I joined with Liza who was carrying fir-like tree on her shoulder.
It looks quite genuine.

Back in the mansion, it's been decorated with many ornaments. Erina carried several samples to the artisan street on the downtown, and mass produced them. Arisa seems to be the one who's requested it, and made me pay the bill. When I was going to hand over gold coins, they told me that several big copper coins were enough. Geez, the wage here is cheap.

I left the decorations to Mia and the maids, and went to help Lulu in the kitchen.

"Welcome back! These sponge cakes should be enough right?"
"Yes, they are."

Or rather, aren't there too many?
Well, if there are leftovers, I'll just give them to my acquaintances.

As I'm preparing for roasting the birds, I think about the party's lineup. It'd be gone in an instant if it's just roasted whole bird, and karaage.
I continue the preparation to make the simple whale karaage in large quantity since it's easy to mass produce. I've abstained to use the whale due to everyone's reaction to it, but since there isn't any particular effect after that, it's probably alright. I might as well share the potatoe chips and the whale karaage to the children of the orphanage.

I caught Talna who was snacking on the karaage, and made her the one in charge to deliver them to the orphanage.

"To be prohibited to eat while surrounded by this smell!　Chevalier-sama is an ogre～"
"Ogre is too much. You're free to eat as much as you want in the party, so work hard with the delivery okay."

I wonder if she's delighted with the 'eat as much as you want' phrase, Talna vigorously drive the carriage to the orphanage even while having her usual sleepy face. Please be careful with the traffic okay?
I've made too much karaage, I guess I'll share them with Ga Hou and the others later at night.

◇

"It's terribwle~"
"Master! It's terrible nanodesu!"
"I see~ it's terrible huh."

When I was decorating the cake, Pochi and Tama were running while looking flustered. Since I was concentrating, I gave some random reply. Liza who's helping with the cooking scolds the two for raising the dust. Mia also came a bit later.

"Is Tama a good kid~?"
"Is Pochi a good kid nanodesu?"
"Good kid?"

You three, why are they questions.

"Everyone is a good kid."
"Yay~"
"With this, Santa will come at night nodesu!"
"Avoided Namahage."

Arisa, what did you tell them this time. Or rather, various things are mixed in!

◇

The youth troop, young maids and Nana are wearing mini skirt Santa outfits. Pina and Liza are wearing long skirt type ones, maybe because

they're embarrassed with it.
I was almost made to wear short pants type Santa outfit, but I evaded it somehow.

"I've come for the invitation today."
"Welcome, Lina-sama."

Lina's arrived slightly late. She's wearing a different dress than the one in the afternoon, it's a dress with open neckline to emphasize sexiness that doesn't suit her age. It's a bit too stretched. She should be able to wear it without forcing herself in five years.
Since she's worked hard, I give a lip service, "You look like an adult today", which prompts her to put her hands on her cheeks, looking shy.

A new guest arrives right at that time.

"Good evening, Satou-san."
"Please come in, Sera-san."

Sera looks a bit different than usual. She's wearing fiercer make up, and ceremonial-like miko clothes that emphasizes on its mysteriousness. She's also wearing several refined accessories that match the miko clothes, and aren't standing out.

When I was praising Sera's miko clothes and accessories, Lina who was at loose end joined the conversation. I wish lady Karina will follow her sociability.

"Sera-sama! Is chevalier-sama acquainted with the miko-sama of oracle?"
"Yes, He's been helping the food distribution at the downtown with me."
"Satou-san, is the lovely lady your acquaintance?"

Huh? Aren't there some sparks flying?

"Ara? It smells nice. Are you having some kind of party?"
"Welcome back, Karina-sama."

Pina and the maids are welcoming lady Karina who was going out with her little brother, Orion-kun, in a hurry.

"Ammazing beauty."
"Oh god, why are people born differently...."

Lina is speechless when she sees lady Karina. After Sera saw lady Karina's breast, she confirmed her breasts with her palms, and then she complained about something to the god. Sera, it won't be a joke if the miko of oracle does that.

When everyone was present, I cut the cake and started the party.
Mia is playing the lute, and Arisa begins singing while matching her.
She's even deliberately prepared lyric cards for the guests. Judging from these rounded handwritings, looks like they're written by Pochi and Tama.

"Jingle bell~, Jingle bell~"
"Meat are falling~"
"Today is fun."
"Meat festival~""Fruits festival~"
"Nanodesu!"

It's wrong, the song is definitely wrong. Arisa presents the independence Christmas dance with the youth troop and Nana in mini skirt Santa outfits.
I wonder what is this heartwarming feeling as if I'm watching the elementary school festival.

Everyone is enjoying the party while eating the cake, enjoying the seasonal fruits, and the chicken karaage. The potato chips that I've made in bulk are unexpectedly popular. I wanted to get the carbonic drinks, but since it was transported for orders, I couldn't get it.

◇

An unexpected person appaeared while we were playing twister game that Arisa had prepared.
Lady Karina was the sole winner of this game. On top of having soft body, since her balance and strength are supported by Raka, she won't collapse no matter what place she ends up on. I also lost quickly and was watching it,

it was exceedingly eye-pleasing. The cause of the lost isn't due to balance, but a pair of ultimate weapons, and even though Mia and Arisa are telling me Guilty, that's a cheap price to pay.

"Yo, Satou! I've come after hearing you're doing Christmas."
""""Hehhero-sama?!""""

Yusha who's holding champagne and his followers intrude somehow, and the party's degree of chaos is increased even further.

"Haven't you departed the duchy capital this morning?"
"Ah, I got some bothersome thing from an acquaintance. So I needed to have some talk with the duke, and so we decided to stay in the duchy capital for a while."

So it's because of the short horn I've given them yesterday.
The hero murmurs, "This pork is way too delicious", while chewing the last remaining piece of the whale karaage.
Nice! Hero!
Thanks to his ill manner, the raw material doesn't come to light.
Hero has appraisal skill on by default, so I was almost exposed.

I ask Lulu to bring out the cakes, and the prepared giant bird teriyaki.

The hero receives the hors d'oeuvre from the maids while opening the champagne that he's brought. Since Lina looked like she wanted to talk to the hero, so I introduced her, she asked for a handshake instead.

"Sera? What are you doing slipping out of the temple!"
"I did not slip out! I've properly acquired permission from head miko-sama."

Such sisterly quarrel, well, it's fine since it's heartwarming though.

"Isn't fine with being late to marry, what's wrong with it anyway~"
"That's exactly true desuwayo. I have 100 siblings anyway, isn't it fine if one of them doesn't get married?!"
"That's right! I'll make a society where a woman can live alone! It's woman's movement!"

Arisa, and lady Maryest are getting excited for something troublesome. Arisa shouldn't have drunk the Champagne that the hero's brought, but she's excited with her talk with lady Maryest.

Or rather, isn't this Champagne's dosage too much?

"Nyahahaha~"
"It's karaage speed eating nanodesu!"
"Do you girls always eat this tasty dishes."
"I'm so envious!"

The two beastearkin and Pochi and Tama combo are having speed eating contest with the karaage, but since I've made heaps of it, it probably won't be gone for the time being.

"Please enjoy the whole roast here. It's quite something when you eat it with this leaf wrapping."
"Oh! This is delicious."
"To make someone who hates vegetables like you to utter such impressions."

Lulu recommends the whole roast bird to the long earkin archer girl from the hero's party. I've never seen the dark elf-like long earkin beside her, but it seems she's one of the hero's party.

"Chicken meat is wonderful after all. Savoriness of the meat is one certain thing, but bird meat is the best for tasting to the bone."
"I think that having no bone is delicious~"
"Pina-san, stop eating the rice porridge and eat these karaage!"
"Talna, this rice porridge isn't just a simple unflavored one. It's using the soup stock from the birds, creating its deep flavor. Do you hear me--"
"Talna, I'll leave you to deal with the two. I live for the meal!"
"Wait Erina, escaping is unfair~"

Liza and the maid company seem to be enjoying the dishes in their paces.

I'm being pressed by lady Karina who's wasted, and priest Loreiya on both sides, and enjoying the blissful feeling. I'm glad that I'm holding the

Christmas party.

"Guilty? That's right, it's guilty! Don't you understand Satou? You don't do you. Breast isn't only about bigness! It's not you know? It's alright as long as it's soft you know? It's true you know?"

I wonder if Ms. Loreiya made her drink, Mia's become talkative.
Mia occupies my lap in place of Tama who's busy with the food, and preaches to me, but since the huge volumes on both sides are too amazing, it passes through my ear.

"Satou? Do you hear me? You don't! You can't do that you know? Listen to me properly. If you don't, I'll do the last resort you know? Yes, my trump card!"

Looks like she's mad at me for not keeping her company properly, she hugs my face with her chest from the front. No well, it's having the opposite effect if you hug that strongly. Her ribs are hitting me, it hurts. Of course I don't say it out loud. She'll get seriously mad if do so.
I waited until Mia is satisfied, I made her sit normally and knitted her hair. It looks like she's satisfied when I care for her. After a while, wonder if she's lost to the alcohol, I hear her sleeping breath, so I put her to sleep.

"Nana, terrible."
"Masta is going to get taken you know?"
"We need recapture strategy! I announce the start of mobilization!"
"Aye."
"Nana, work hard."

I don't remember much of the time when Nana attacks me from behind.
It's a very, very happy night.

That night, starting with Arisa, everyone has hanged socks beside their beds, so I put the prepared Christmas presents inside.

While imagining the delighted faces of everyone after seeing the presents, we hold the Christmas night part.
Sipping Champagne while listening to the moody music is nice once in a while.

Death March

- Volume 9 -

9-1. To the Town of Magic Hunters

Satou's here. My workaholic father had been returning from work late at night, and going to work early in the morning since I was a child, maybe that's why I don't remember meeting him much. Although, I never thought that I would be in the same position before I got married.

◇

It's been awhile since our last wagon journey. We always rode on the wagon when we were in the duchy capital, but the duchy capital main street with its neatly prepared soil is quite different than the undeveloped narrow road at the back country. Since the branch of the great river runs along the main road, there are only a few carriages that are running here. Most are transported by small boats on the branch river.

"Gatagoto~" "Gotogoto nanodesu!"
<TLN: Japanese onomatopoeia for rattle.>

Pochi and Tama are looking awfully excited ever since we've gone out of the town. They've been pulling and shaking my sleeves on both sides by matching the shaking of the wagon, so it's hard to read book in the menu.

"Mou~, just what do you girls find so fun."
"Don't you know nodesu?"
"Arisa is still green~"
"She's no good nanodesu~"
"Mukka~ So cheeky even though you're just Pochi and Tama~"

Arisa is saying something like some kind of kid boss in the block, but she seems to say it for the sake of saying it and doesn't mean to offend.
Seeing Lulu who's been giggling while facing the road on the coachman's seat since awhile ago, it looks like she knows the reason.

"Lulu, don't laugh, tell me if you know it."

"You~can't, since it's a 『Quiz』, you can't ask the answer from other people."

Arisa is growling, "Gununu", such unladylike groan from Lulu's reply. Since Lulu's used the lines that Arisa usually says to everyone, she probably can't rebut it.

However, I also don't know, I guess I'll ask for a hint.

"I'm sorry, Pochi and Tama. I also don't know though?"
"Gaan.""Na, nanodesuu."

Tama, please stop speaking sound effects out loud. I pat the head of the two, who look like puppies that have been betrayed by their master, as if to gloss over it. I wonder, am I the bad one here?

"Monopoly of master~""It's nice to be together nodesu."
"I see."

Come to think of it, when we were in the duchy capital, especially the latter half, we hadn't been together beside during the meal and sleep. Since, during the latter half, I was like an overworking father who came home late after everyone had gone to the bed, let's pamper them a bit now.

"Satou."

Mia who was scouting with Liza, and Nana, together with the hornless beast comes back. She jumps from the hornless beast toward the wagon, so I receive her and put her down on the wagon. Even though she's gained a bit of fat, she's still quite light. Looks like she'll be fine even without going through dietary restriction like Arisa.

"Master, a fallen tree is blocking the road up ahead."
"Master, the way the tree has fallen looks unnatural. It feels like it's been artificially made."
<TLN: It's impossible to tl but Nana's always used "Masuta" to call Satou while all other members uses "Goshujin-sama". They both mean "Master" in English.>

The fallen tree is probably the handiwork of thieves to stop carriages. Since I found the thieves on top of the low hill a bit apart from the highway when Liza and the others went scouting, I've already dealt with them with [Remote Stun]. Magic is convenient after all.

"Pochi, Tama, change into your work clothes. Let's remove the fallen tree."
"Roger~""Hear hear~ nanodesu."

I told Liza that I would remove the fallen tree with magic, but since she wanted to use the tree as a training by likening it to a monster, it was refused. This is just right to check the performance of everyone's magic swords. If they can't properly hold back when they're going against thieves, they will surely kill the opponents.

"Master, I wish for charging nodesu."
"You can't~"
"Tama is right. If you don't charge it with your own mana, it won't be a training."

I somehow evaded Pochi's request attack that came with upturned eyes while she was presenting her short magic sword. It might have been dangerous if Tama didn't support.

No one can use magic edge like Liza, but Tama and Nana are able to charge mana without problem. However, Pochi is the only one who's having a hard time with it. According to Arisa's investigation, it's not only because she's short on MP, but she also needs to instantly operates large amount of mana, so it's not going well for her. Although, there aren't any difference between mana of Tama and Pochi.

"Yay, it's done nodesu!"

Pochi who is finally able to put mana into the short magic sword turns to me and puts out "Praise me" aura, so I praise her, "You've done well", while patting her head. Her tail looks like it'll break.

"First turn, Nana will go. 『Shell』."

Nana freely displays the raised physical strength from the physical

reinforcement nature magic by wielding a shield that's larger than her body and a one-handed sword.

Although the sizes of the magic swords of Nana, Pochi, and Tama are different, I've put the same magic circuit on them.
After filling it with mana, once you recite the password (Command), the magic circuit carved on the sword will activate. 『Shell』 generates cylindrical mana field around the axis of the magic sword.
It's a magic circuit that's normally put into shields or armors, but you can use the sword as a blunt weapon with it, and it's also useful when you fight against monsters with acid or putrid bodily fluids, so I try to experiment with it.

At first I made a magic sword carved with a magic circuit that could generate fire, but it seemed that the heat from the fire is too bad for the material, when I tried to use it, the sword broke. I put the plan on the back burner until I get some material that's stronger against heat. Since it'll burn your hand when you hold the sword after using it for a long time, I also have to find insulating material it seems.

It's a plain magic circuit, but it's probably ideal for dealing with thieves that we've been going through a lot this time.
With just a single strike from Nana, a fallen tree the size of three of my waists is snapped right in half until the inside.

"Second turn, Tama's going~"
"Third turn, Pochi nanodesu!"

Tama is wielding two short swords now due to the influence of the martial art tournament. She's keeping her balance nicely to the point that you won't think that she doesn't have dual wielding skill. Pochi keeps the same style as before with a one-handed short sword, and a shield.

Tama utilizes the weights of the two magic short swords, no, she's skilfully utilizing the inertia from her assaults, striking the fallen trees as if dancing. Each of her strike is only about 20-30% as strong as Nana's, but since she's hitting a lot, she cuts the thin fallen tree and branches in succession.

Pochi simply wields the short sword, and charges ahead. She's powered up

with the heavy blow skill properly. Yet, it's only about 80% as strong as Nana, I wonder if it's because of her physique, or her weapon.

"Fourth turn, 『Magic Edge』 『Heavy Blow』."

Liza attacks in a low posture while leaving red trails of light. The reason why she doesn't use Thrusting skill is probably because striking damage is more important than piercing for this.
However, spears have too high of piercing power after all, she only leaves a big hole on the fallen tree, unlike Nana and the others who've smashed the tree.

I should make an attachment for Liza's spear for when she's fighting an enemy with piercing resistance.

With Mia's Baloon magic and Arisa's Repulsion magic, the fallen tree that's been torn into pieces are removed from the road.

Since the thieves had recovered during the meantime, I made them sleep once again with [Remote Stun]. I've already collected their weapons with Magic Hand. There isn't anything noteworthy, so I'll melt them to become raw material.

◇

"Do you guys have some business in the village?"
"No, we don't plan to stop by in particular. It looks like some things have been burned, did some thieves attack?"

When we were passing near a farm village, we got challenged by some armed farmers. This farmer looks to have some burn injuries, but the farmers behind him seem to only have some kind of scar injuries. In addition, their weapons are all crudely made, you can even call it improvised. Things like wooden spears with only the tips shaved, or spears with smashed obsidian stones attached on the tips.

There are hatred and fear on the eyes of the farmers.

"I, it was someone even worse than thieves. It was a noble."

The young man announced as if vomiting. I feel some glance from a far away house. We should get away from here as soon as I've gathered some information.

"Was it a noble from around here?"
"No, I had never seen him before. He asked if we were hiding beastmen, when we told him that we didn't know, he burned our houses with magic, and threatened us to confess."

A fire magic-user noble who's searching for beastmen.
I'm terribly reminded of someone. It's the foreign noble who had tried to buy the white tigerkin princess in the dark auction. Since I don't remember his name, I search for him by limiting to only around up to the neighbor town from here. Looks like he's staying on the town of Puta that we're heading to. Let's mark him at least. It'll be troublesome if he mistakenly attacks Tama.

"That's unfortunate. We also have to be careful as to not get involved. These are thanks for the information, please accept it."

I take out three lower-ranked potions from the accessory case in the wagon, and pass it to the young man. Since he looked doubtful, I told him that they were cheap magic medicines (potions), and then the wagon departed before he could say something.

"You're quite generous eh~"
"They were just dummy that I've made for the wagon, they were really cheap stuffs you know. One is worth one copper coin at most."
"Chea~p."

They're leftovers from when I was mass producing military-use magic potions, from the alchemy book I had bought in the dark auction. They came out when raw materials weren't enough, or after I omitted some step. The lower-ranked potions from earlier are about the same as lower ranked magic potions I usually make that are 20 times more diluted. Nevertheless, they're not inferior to lower-ranked potion that's on the market. However,

since you can make the dilution without magic cores, it's quicker and easier to make the potion normally considering the trouble.
Since the [Diluted Lower-Ranked Potion] that are made from this method has a weak effect, I can freely give it to people, it's convenient.

◇

And then, three days after we depart from the riverside town of the great river, we can finally see the town of Puta at last. This town is congregated by people called magic hunters that are working by hunting monsters to collect their magic cores. Even though the job sounds strong, most of them are not higher than level 10. In this duchy capital, there are several towns where magic hunters are gathering like in this Puta town.

I've learned the circumstance of things around here from Tarina-san of the scroll workshop. She was complaining when the magic cores that had arrived from Puta town were small and had low purities.

Around the forest near this Puta town, there are eight nests with about 100 demi-goblins each, they're separated for 10 kilometers apart from each other. Small nests with about dozen of demi-goblins also exist here and there. They're probably controllably hunted so that they won't become too many, or die out.

Humans don't seem to be the only one who hunt demi-goblins, various snake, lizard or frog monsters are loitering around near the nests.

Even now, there seem to be several magic hunter parties that are hunting the demi goblins, loitering around in the forest. One of those parties seems to have just been returning to Puta town, and from what we can see from here, they're having some kind of trouble.

Good grief, there's a lot of troubles in this world.

9-2. At the Town of Magic Hunters

Satou's here. I often did part-time jobs during my school days, but I rarely ever had money problem. I might have been lucky for having avoided the incomprehensible wage structure during internship.

◇

There are a group of five people having heated arguments in front of the gate.

"That's why I said we should've asked for an advance payment since we wouldn't be able to pay the tax for entering the city."
"Why should we have to do something so annoying."
"That's right~, who was the useless one who begged to take him with us while saying that he would be useful."
"Getting tired right after he began carrying the luggage, and drinking all the water himself."
"The worst part is how he wrongly cut the fur on the corpse of the Crimson Fox we had defeated after much trouble."

The four women dismissed the protest of the boy who only has one arm while sneering at him.
If we're in a tale, this is the scene where we go help the boy, but I wonder why. I can't help but think what the women have said are justified.

I wonder if the boy who's being a drag is also desperate, he's still persisting. He's not discouraged~

"Then, by the evening of this day, come to the purchasing counter in the bar. When you come, we'll give you one sixth of the reward, that are three copper coins as promised in the beginning."
"Hey wait, I've defeated four goblins myself haven't I. You forgot four copper coins as the commission y'know."
"You~, you just killed goblins that were already dying from our attacks

from the side right?"
"How could you even demand rewards for that. You're really shameless."
"I still did defeat them!"

While looking down on the persistent boy, the tall girl who's the leader shrugs her shoulders, and proposes a compromise.

"Okay, okay. However, those four goblins weren't defeated by you alone, half. I'll give you half the rewards, two copper coins. Come to the bar by the evening."

Ridiculing the boy who looks relieved, the surrounding women are smiling badly.

"Hehe, if you don't come quick, the money will all turn into alcohol y'know."
"Al~right, let's bet for whether we have finished drinking before the boy comes or not."
"Nice~, I put one big copper coin for before."
"I'm betting five copper coins for before."
"Gyahahaha, there won't be any bet the~n."

Looks like they will really drink it all if he takes too much time.
The boy seems to have the same opinion, as he begins to negotiate with the gatekeeper in a hurry.

◇

"You've heard our talk earlier right? If you let us enter now, we'll pay the fee later properly."
"Humph, I'm not fit to be a gatekeeper if I believe what you magic hunter bunch say. How about hunting beasts that you can use as a payment in kind before the evening?"
"There's no way we can catch beast without trap or tools."
"Then, give it up."

Ho, so you can use payment in kind, I didn't know.
The gatekeeper who has noticed our wagon coming closer drives the boy

the side. The boy was going to rush toward the town during that chance, but another gatekeeper toppled his feet, and kept him on the ground.

"Hey, welcome to Puta town. I've never seen you before, are you a merchant?"
"No, we only want to stop by during our trip."

I show the gatekeeper my silver plate ID.

"This is, excuse me. You were a noble."
"Excuse me noble-sama, you've said that you're on a trip, but this is Puta the farthest town. Where in the world are you going? Don't tell me you're going to the nest of the Wyverns beyond the mountain to take their eggs?"
"Oy, Gatts."

When I check on the map since I'm interested with the gatekeepers' words, there are certainly Wyverns in the mountain along the way. Wyvern's egg must be big I think.

"I do want to cross the mountain, but I didn't know about the Wyverns. Taking the egg you say, is it delicious?"
"It mite' be mighty delicious, but they sell handsomely. The rumor says that you can exchange them for gold coins, weight-for-weight, if you bring them to the royal capital, or the Silga kingdom on the other side of the mountain."
"Although I've never seen the real thing, but they turn it into the Wyvern steed for the dragoons."

If the egg's weight is 500 grams, then it'll be around 150 gold coins huh. Silga kingdom seems to be a neighboring small kingdom beyond the mountain range to the east. By the way, the Bornean forest that we're heading to is over the mountain range to the southeast.

"Hey, noble-sama!"
"Shut up you."

The gatekeeper quickly silents the boy, who have talked to me, with the tip of the spear he's holding on his hand. I think he doesn't need to go that far.

"It's fine. What is it, boy."

The first half is for the gatekeeper, and the latter half is for the boy who's still being trampled.

"Noble-sama, I need it for entering the town. Lend me two copper coins!　I will return it without fail."
"At least use polite speech!"
"I don't know such thing like polite speech. Isn't it polite speech already if I just use 『Sama』."

However, if he borrows two copper coins from me, he'll be left with three copper coins even if he pay it back with no interest, is he alright with that?

"Okay, I'll lend you some."
"You sure!?"
"Chevalier-sama, this guy is a magic hunter y'know? They're bunches who can't keep money overnight. You absolutely won't get your money back."
"Don't say unnecessary things after he's agreed. I'll absolutely return it!"

I give two copper coins to the boy who's slipped out of the gatekeeper's foot. I wonder if he hasn't taken a bath for a long time, he smells chokingly bad. No, this is, there's probably smell of goblins' blood, and cut meat mixed in.

The boy receives the money from me with his only arm, and gives it to the gatekeeper like he's throwing it.

"That's right, noble-sama! If you haven't decided on your inn, go to that gate inn you can see from here. It's really expensive, but it's famous for their delicious food."

After telling me so, the boy goes to the main street while buzzing his arm. Now then, what should I do with this tepid gaze from the gatekeeper.

"Chevalier-sama, I think being a good person is a virtue, but there are a lot of people who only indulge on those virtues without feeling thankful in the world, y'know?"
"Oy, leave it. Chevalier-sama is troubled."
"No, I appreciate the concern."

Looks like he's concerned for real, so I thank him. For the time being, seems there's no problem in entering the city.
When Lulu is going to depart the wagon, the gatekeeper looks like he's remembered something and warns me.

"There's an insane foreign noble staying in the place of baronet Poton, the governor here, so it's better for you not to get close there."

When I check on the place of the governor--if I'm not mistaken, it's a town consul that functions like a magistrate--baronet Poton, there's the aforementioned fire magician near him.

The fire magician is called Dwot Dasles. It looks like he's a marquis of a kingdom called Makiwa. Since the kingdom's name doesn't appear in the traveler's journal, I don't know where it is. I think it's probably among the group of small countries near Rumooku kingdom or Silga kingdom if it has something to do with the tigerkins.

With [Arson], and [Murder] that he has on his Rewards and Punishments, how could they let him into the town.

◇

This Puta town is quite small, unlike the towns we've been to up until now. It's only one kilometer wide at most. The city is roughly divided into four blocks around the small mansion where the governor is. The west block where we are now, the north block where the harbor is, the east block with the pleasure quarter, and the south block where the workers quarter and the slum are located. Looks like each block has a residential area.
The races are composed of 70% humans, and then ratkins, sea lionkin, and rabbitkin form the 20% with the same ratio each. There are other races beside them, but the number is low. The slaves are around 10% from various races, but the human slaves are relatively numerous.
It looks like the only nobles in this town are the house of baronet Poton and marquis Dasles.

I should be visiting him as a noble, but there's no need to deliberately get myself into trouble. When I check on the nobility correlation chart that I've bought from Toruma's house, it seems he's among the lowest seat of nobility from the house of marquis Lloyd, so not visiting him probably isn't going to become that big of a problem.

Nevertheless, this correlation chart is convenient. Let's make some toys for Mayuna-chan as thanks next time.

When the wagon has entered the inn's courtyard, a girl who seems to be the helper comes running. I leave the wagon to Lulu and the others, and go into the inn with the girl leading. I only take Arisa and Nana along.

The innkeeper who's waiting inside changes his expression into one that looks like he's found a source of income when he sees me. This is strange, I don't think I'm wearing expensive-looking clothes today.

"Welcome young master, I have just the right room for you."

He leads us to the room while rubbing his hands on his big hairy arms. The room is on the third floor of a different wooden building, you can even pay more to hire guards during the night. If we stay for more than five days, the guards will be free. The inn charges one silver coin for one night. Compared to the gate inn on Seryuu city which charges one big copper coin for a night, this is probably cheap in comparison.
There's a bathroom in this building, but there's only a bathtub which only fits one person, and of course there's no hot water facility either. You can boil water, but it'll take time, so they ask for us to do it anytime beside during meals if possible. Looks like you can draw water from any channel beside from the drinking water reservoir, but aren't those shared with the drainage? Well, I can just use [Pure Water] on it before I draw the water.

The innkeeper advises us to bring our luggage to the warehouse in the building since thieves often come in midnight. There's nothing inside the luggage, but to not draw unnecessary attentions, I bring them all into the inn.

"Yo, is this the place where the noble-sama is staying?"

A hunter man who looks like a boss of thieves enters the inn courtyard while bringing a big baggage on his shoulder. There are dismantled deer meat inside the cloth.

"Hou, Goku. You've brought a big game."
"Yeah, it's been awhile since the last one. Is the young master over there the noble-sama? How bout it, they're just at the right time for eating. There's no entrails since I've eaten them on the day of the hunt though."

Gahahaha, the man laughs, apparently this hunter is selling the deer. The price is two silver coins, half of the duchy capital's. To inform the market price like this suddenly, this man sure is poor at doing business. I feel that he knows about the information (about Satou) too fast, but he probably heard it from the gatekeeper.

Since there is no kitchen in the separate building, I leave the cooking to the inn chef.

Since there's still some time before dinner, I take Pochi and Tama, who are full of vigors, on a stroll. Just in case, Pochi and Tama are equipped with thin mantles with hoods, leather armors, and wooden swords, just like they've been in the duchy capital. I'm wearing simple clothes that are a white shirt, and trousers.

With these very plain appearances, I probably won't get entangled with some strange guy.

9-3. At the Town of Magic Hunters (2)

Satou's here. I remember the time when I got a burn during my visit to my grandfather's house in the countryside, it wasn't cured with over-the-counter drug, but by applying ripped aloe that had grown on the garden to the burn. It was a folk's remedy, but I remember that it worked well. I wonder if there's aloe in another world.

◇

"Where are we going~?""Nodesu?"
"We're going to the harbor. Looks like they're selling many rare fruits there, so we're going on a sightseeing."

I reply to Pochi and Tama who have just asked about it when we're walking on the street while holding hands.
It's about 10 minutes walk from the inn to the harbor. According to the innkeeper, it's not a market, but just several stalls and food carts that are selling food and drink for laborers and sailors, so I'm just going to take a look.
Mia and the others seemed to be interested too, but since she looked like she was planning something with Arisa, I left them in the inn. Liza was also going to follow as a bodyguard, but since the security looked bad, I asked her to guard Lulu and the others. Nana was particularly fine with either, but since it was dangerous, I left her. There are a lot of sea lion children in the harbor we're going now.

There are a lot of one-story houses with good ventilations in this town, maybe it's due to the fact that the temperature is like everlasting spring here. Every house is built about 30 centimeters high above the ground, although not to the point of being a high-floor type houses. The roads are bare soil, and weeds are growing on the berm. There seem to be some vacant lots here and there too.

Overall, the people walking in the town are wearing thin clothes with short

skirts. As expected, women older than 20s are wearing longer skirts, yet their ankles can still be seen. A lot of girls that are minors wear short ones above the knee. I couldn't care less about the men, but many are wearing nothing on the upper half, or bold open-neck shirts. There are a lot of children of around upper grade elementary school ages wearing shirts that display their bellybuttons on full. Apparently, it's not because of fashion, but because they're wearing old clothes that don't fit their bodies anymore. However, I think these make it feels like we're in a southern country. Many children who are below that age are wearing baggy shirts, but the rest are naked. At least, they're wearing loincloths, but they're running around in barefoot energetically.

Tama suddenly parts her hand and runs to the berm, apparently she's picked some grasses on the roadside and come back.

"Found ninigi grass~"

Ninigi grass is a medicinal herb for treating fevers. They can only be used in compounding since they have weak poison if used as is, you need to compound them in order to make them into potion. Therefore, most people don't recognize them as medicinal plants. Their poison only cause upset stomach, so they can also be used as laxative if diluted.

However, Tama does a good job remembering them even though we've only ever found them for 2-3 times during our journey.
I receive the medicinal plants from Tama, and put it in the bag into the Storage. While praising Tama, I search for [Ninigi Grass] in one kilometer radius. Apparently, the medicinal plants are growing commonly like grasses in the vicinity of this town. It's not a medicine that I use much, but I guess I'll secure some as a supply.

In the vacant land along the way, the ninigi grasses like earlier are growing en masse, so I ask Pochi and Tama to gather them. I search again just in case, and besides the mugwort-like plants that can be used to stop bleeding, there's no other usable plants. Besides having red veins on its leaves, the mugwort-like plants look just like normal mugworts. Of course I've warned the two to not pluck the mugwort-like plants. The local people here probably use them as common medicinal herbs.

After seeing Pochi and Tama, children from the neighborhood also begin to gather the ninigi grass and put them on the mat that I've put on the ground beside me. I wonder if they think this as some kind of play?
When half of the ninigi grasses growing in this lot have been collected, I announce that it's over, and give little something to the children. One penny for each. I feel that it's too cheap, but from the story of the aunties during the food distribution on the duchy capital, looks like it's enough. In fact, the children receive the money delightfully.

"Yo, Nii-chan, what are you trying to do making the children gather poisonous plants. Are you going to serve it to the damned lord?"
"They can be used as laxatives indeed, but they will turn into fever medicines if you compound them."

His words make him sounds like a hooligan, but it doesn't seem like he's trying to pick a fight. He's really just interested it seems.
This human young man seems to be a laborer. He's tanned with bulging muscles. However, since he's only level 4, Pochi and Tama are probably stronger.

"So you're really a pharmacist! Please, I'll pay the cost no matter what it takes, can you give me some medicine for burn?"

Burn huh....
I have a bad hunch, so I ask for the detail, and it's just as I've expected. The stupid noble from before came to them to ask about the white tiger princess, and threw several fire bolts toward the houses of beastmen, burning many of them to the ground. At that time, the big sister of this young man tried to save the beastmen children and got seriously injured by the large fire.

I ask the young man if the guards of this town do anything to him, but since the stupid noble is under the protection of the governor of this town, baronet Poton, they don't throw him into the jail. After the day the stupid noble started to be confined in the house of Poton, the servants of Poton house began to search for the whereabout of the white tiger princess. However, they're not getting any clue, and the servants' actions have become violent.

Of course there won't be clue. They (white tigerkin) are heading toward the royal capital after all.
The white tiger-kun party probably pretended to flee here to spread false information. I think it's quite effective, but it's troublesome.

"Nee-san, I've brought a pharmacist."

She only replies with a whimper. From the information on the map, she's a 22 years old, and should be single. No, her single status doesn't matter. Yep.

I ask Pochi and Tama to wait near the entrance in the room, and go to the interior room after the young man.

This is awful.
The burn is not spread, but it goes from her right hand to half of her face.
The young man sends his nephew and niece to the room with Pochi and Tama to empty the space for me. Is she perhaps a single mother? No, it's nothing.

She can be easily healed with just one diluted medicine, but to do it without leaving a wound seems like it'll be difficult.
I guess I'll observe the effect in exchange for the medicine. I make the woman drink a magic potion with normal concentration without the boost from mana healing and titles. Since one bottle heals for 300 HP, it can heal the woman even if she's in critical conditions 10 times.

The young man beside me is holding his breath.
Yup, I understand that feeling. No matter how many times I see it, the swift effect of this magic potion feels unpleasant. New pink skin is already forming on the muscle tissues that can be seen.
Just in case, I make the woman eat things with high calories, and sleeping medicine that I've made for treating serious injury. She should be completely recovered by morning with this.

The young man thanks me to the point as if he's going to kiss my shoes, and as the reward for the treatment, I ask him to lead me to the place where that stupid noble has gone wild.

Three-story tenement? But, it's been burnt down. Several people are lying

on the mats that have been spread under the shadow of the wreckage. Since I perceive that the beastkins are getting on guards from the humans us who are approaching them, I let Pochi and Tama to lower their hoods. The beastkins slightly drop their guards after seeing the two.

"What do you want. Human."
"I'm Hyona's little brother. I've brought a pharmacist."
"Come to think of it, I've seen you before. Go heal Hyona rather than us. It's already impossible for the fellows here. It won't be enough to buy medicines even if we sell ourselves."

It's certainly expensive if you buy them from shops.
However, this town shouldn't have problem with materials for potions if the magic hunters hunt the demi-goblins, the magic cores must be exported to the duchy capital after all huh.

There are two rabbitkins and one ratkin people who are sleeping. The degrees of their burns are more terrible than the young man's big sister. Their wounds are only covered with big leaves that seem to be for soothing fever.
They were recovered by just making them drank the same potion that Hyona-san had drank thought. I feel that the recovery effect is better, I wonder if it's because beastkins have good endurance. Since the three also look famished, I give them high calories food & sleeping medicines.

Since there are several people who have slight burns near the tenement, I leave one bottle of burn ointment. It's just a small bottle with 20 grams of it inside though. It's also a leftover from when I was experimenting for its effect, but it should be more effective than the one on sale.

◇

"Young master, here it is."
"Young master, it's here."

I said my farewell to the beastkins who expressed their gratitudes exaggeratedly, and arrived at my original goal, the harbor. The daughters of

the rabbitkin, who are a 9 years old, and a 6 years old, that I've saved earlier have guided us.

Baskets full of fruits are lined up on the mats. There are small melon-like fruits inside a basket. There are also tachibana citrus and Japanese pears-like fruits. It seems everything is something that are growing wildly in the forest near this town.

"How 'bout it, anything is one penny."

Cheap.
Since we're here already, I buy various things and share it with everyone. Of course, with the rabbitkin girls too. It seems that the children have increased before I knew it, but it's fine. The melon is quite delicious with its watermelon-like thin sweetness, although there are also unripe fruits. I'm buying several of them as souvenirs for Mia.
The fruits peddler laughs while saying, "I'm gonna close my shop early today." jokingly. I wonder if he gets into it halfway through, he distributes the fruits to the children for free. he's a good-natured man.

"Yo nii-san, how 'bout some vegetables good for your health?"

Another man who seem to be attracted to this comes to pitch his vegetables. No, I didn't come for vegetables.

I could have immediately declined him, but since Pochi and Tama were still chewing half of the melons I had bought, I asked him to show the line up while putting small aprons on the necks of the two. Putting these aprons now might have been too late. Let's clean them with [Soft Wash] before returning to the inn. Lulu will be angry if they return like that.

In the bastket that the man has brought, bitter gourds, paprikas-like vegetables, and red tomatoes!--It's probably tomatoes--are lined up.

Since he says that I can try it, I bite one of the tomatoes. It's a tomato alright, although it's a bit overripe. Seems they're called red fruits around here. Pochi and Tama also take a bite out of curiosity, but looks like it doesn't suit their palate, their faces look complicated. Children relatively dislike tomatoes don't they.

"Are these all the red fruits you have?"
"There's a lot more on the field. But, it's still a bit more until they're ripe enough for eating."

I rather have ones that aren't this ripe, so I ask him to deliver them to the gate inn. When I gave him 10 copper coins as the payment, he vigorously rowed a small boat upstream as if he had grown wings to fly, and came back with the crops. There seems to be a small farm village on the upstream from here.

◇

Afterwards, we're trying various things like grilled dried oval squids, and grilled dried small fish.

What's with this pied piper of Hamelin situation.

After Pochi and Tama amiably shared their own shares, even though it wasn't excessive, it became like this. Well, they're something I've bought for the two, so they're free to do what they want with it.

However, seems I need to disperse them.
I pick up a decently-sized stone below, and play with it. I thought that it was light, when I check with the AR, it's not a stone, but a coconut-like fruit. It's probably unripe for eating, so it's been thrown away.

The stupid noble shows up his face on the corner of the road.

"There you are, you cursed white beasts!　■■■　■■"

The people of this town are probably aware of this stupid noble's face.
Both the adults and the children are running away scattered. There's no helping it since the opponent is a level 20 magician. Men who look to be the stupid noble's retainers, and the baronet's personal troop follow behind him. Looking from their expression, they probably also want to stop this stupid noble's act of violence.

Since he's obviously aiming for Tama who is beside me, I throw the coconut to the face of the noble who's chanting fire magic in the downtown. While leaving a comical sound, the stupid noble fell from his horse. Since he was falling on his head, I reluctantly used [Magic Hand] to kill the momentum at a bare minimum.
However, I don't need to concern myself with stopping the retainers from stepping him with their horses do I. His health decreased fast, but thanks to his level 20, he narrowly escaped death.

The retainers dismounted their horses in panic, confiscated a cart from the nearby townspeople, put the stupid noble in it, and carried him to the baronet mansion. Sheesh, what busy guys.

I clap the shoulders of Pochi and Tama who have taken up their wooden swords and stood before me, removing their tensions. The two came forward and guarded me when the stupid noble began to chant magic.

Cheers break out from the townspeople, but please excuse me from this.

9-4. At the Town of Magic Hunters (3)

Satou's here. False accusation is never missing in any society, but in a world that has social positions, they can unreasonably accuse you of crimes. In Japan, you can entrust it to the court and your lawyer, but in another world, being passive seems to be fatal.

◇

Two guards dismount their horses and come toward us.

"Oy, come with us to the station."
"That person is still a noble even though he's like that. Come obediently. I'll let you try to appeal for your life at least."

Oy oy, you're going to treat someone who threw a fruit to another one, who was trying to do something that was like firing a gun, or rather an explosion inside the town, like a death row criminal. It looks like I'll have some bad time if I follow them obediently.

I take out the silver ID from my chest, and show it to the guards.

"T, this is, so you were a noble-sama! Just, how long have you been here."
"About several hours ago. Rather than that, I've never seen that noble even in the duchy capital, where is he from? I don't think even any honorary noble of Shiga kingdom will try to use magic attack in the middle of a town."

What a thing to say even if I do say so myself. For now, I'll warn them while speaking bossily. Putting honorary thing aside, he's pretty bad of a person for trying to use magic to burn citizens in a town.

I drive it further toward the guards who are hesitating to say anything.

"Is baronet Poton aware of this behavior? Depending on the situation, I may need to inform duke-sama and marquis Lloyd of this."

The guards are averting their gazes from me.
This must mean that the baronet is an accomplice, or rather he's authorized the acts.

I have a reason for cornering the guards here.
The baronet in question is coming here followed by several bodyguards. If I had let myself caught, I would need to physically suppress them and made the talk complicated.

"Oy, guards! That's the criminal who raised his hands against marquis Dasles. Arrest him quick."

The baronet who's just arrived orders the guards arrogantly, he's a plump 40s years old man who looks like an underling. He becomes disturbed and avoids my eyes when he just looks at me who's folding my arms calmly.

"Marquis Dasles? There shouldn't be a noble like that in our kingdom. A person who should have been protecting the town couldn't possibly not only overlook the atrocities of a foreign noble, but even aid him could he?"

I calmly approach the baronet who's closing and opening his mouth. Since I'm empty handed, the guards aren't doing anything.

I take out a letter from my bag and give it to the baronet. It's something that marquis Lloyd has written when I told him that I was going to Puta town.

Baronet Poton drops his line of view towards the letter while looking doubtful, but when he sees the sealing wax that's pressed with marquis Lloyd's house crest, his face becomes cramped. He opens the letter timidly, and reads it, then his face turns blue and he's fainted just like that.

There shouldn't be anything significant written in this letter, at most there's probably an instruction to accommodate me while I'm in this town.
However, the fact that I'm an acquaintance of marquis Lloyd, and a close one at that, is probably conveyed with this letter. If I report his deeds here to marquis Lloyd, at best he's going to be stripped off his duty, although he probably won't be executed, but his peerage might be passed down to his child and be forced to retire.

Truly a fox that borrows the authority of a tiger!
<TLN: Japanese idiom, means "a small man who's acting arrogantly through borrowed authority.>
I didn't think that I would get to use my connection like this.

"I'll stop by at the baronet Poton's mansion tomorrow. I expect you to give the proper judgment to this Dasles person before then."

I tell it to the guards around in place of the fainted baronet. These people should be the kinds who will try to save their own necks, so they will probably deal with the troublesome stupid noble. A fire magician he is, it'd be a different story if he was healthy, but now that he's half-dead, they should be able to easily restrain him.

For some reason, applauses break out from the surrounding, it's very embarrassing.

Do your best today too Poker Face skill.

>Title [The Official who Protects the People] Acquired
>Title [Condemner] Acquired

◇

After the uproar, I decide to go to the firm to collect some information.

Unfortunately, the firm doesn't have any important info. At most it's only information about the road that goes to the mountain range where Bornean is. The road seem to have been used until 200 years ago when the wyverns and beast monsters have began to inhabit the mountain range.
Even for now, the farthest village 10 kilometers from here have been engulfed by the forest, or rather the grasses.

Even if that's true, I can just cut grass with wind magic and fix the soil with earth magic I guess.

When Pochi, Tama and I have arrived at the inn, the smell of something good is drifting.

"Ha ra ha ra♪" "Ha ra he ri～♪"

The two are singing the songs for when they're hungry while buzzing their arm that are connected with mine. They spontaneously create these hunger songs according to their feeling at the time, so even I don't know how many are the types.
<TLN: "Hara hetta" is a Japanese slank for "I'm hungry.">

"We're back."
"Welcome back～ Ah, good. The innkeeper's told that the meal will be ready soon～"
"Master, they say that they can bring the food here, but they recommend us to eat at the dining room since the guests are sparse today."
"Did you ask whether it was fine for non-humans?"
"But of course. It's okay he said."

A, arisa. Wasn't that phrase old even for Showa.
I pull myself together, and give the melons to Mia as her souvenirs.

"Then, let's might as well go to the dining room."

Looks like the ordered tomatoes have arrived from the harbor earlier, they've been put in the basket on the table. The five seedlings that I've requested, complete with the soils, are lined on the table. With this, I can secure tomatoes even after we've arrived at the labyrinth city. This will be pointless if they sell tomatoes normally there, but if that happens, I can just cultivate it in Muno city then.

The cooking are a simple whole roast.
Looks like you eat it by scraping the meat, dip them in the white sauce put on the bowl, and eat it after you roll them with red-leaf lettuce-like vegetable. There are also other plates with steamed vegetables and pilaf lavished with plenty of vegetables for Mia.

Looks like the white sauce is mayonnaise. I didn't spread the mayonnaise

since it'd have increased people who would become fat at the duchy capital, but it exists normally huh. Since I didn't see it at the duchy capital, I wonder if it's a local specialty of this town.

However, this is--

"Roasted deer meat with vegetables yummy."
"Mayo mayo～"
"Mayo nanodesu!"
"Mayonnaise is delicious indeed, but I think it's good if you eat it without adding anything first."
"Ara? It's delicious but, this mayonnaise is."

Lulu who's about to eat the roasted deer meat rolled in vegetable dipped in the mayonnaise looks around as if confirming something. Yes, the mayonnaise here is very heavy. I don't know if it's because the type of the fat is different, or if the it's due to the composition, but it feels like I'll get a heartburn if we eat too much of it.

While poking the cheek of Mia that's pouting as she's eating her pilaf in silence, I warn everyone not to eat too much mayonnaise.

"Noble-sama, does this white sauce not match your taste?"
"No, it's very delicious. Did the innkeeper make this white sauce?"

The innkeeper who had seen the situation called me out.
However, an intruder came before he could reply. The single-armed boy from earlier enters the inn while swinging his left arm.

"Kuuh, what a nice smell. Noble-sama, thanks for before. These are the two copper coins I've borrowed. It was really helpful."

I receive the two copper coins he's presenting. There probably was some quarrel when he was getting his rewards. The edge of his mouth is cut, and there's a bruise on his right cheek.

"Occhan, get me the same thing as that noble-sama's, I'll pay the bill."
"That's impossible, there's no ingredients left."
"No way～"

"You wouldn't be able to pay it even if there was any. I'll make some grilled fish with white sauce set, our specialty."
"Okay, that's alright."

The grilled fish with white sauce here is two copper coins. Is it fine, spending so recklessly like this.

"If you spend so much, won't you become unable to enter the town again?"
"That's a talk for that time. I don't know when I will die, so I'm gonna eat delicious things when I can."

Is it philosophical, or is he just not thinking the consequence.
I'm a bit worried with the three beastkin girls who are nodding to it.

"Oh right, you were talking about the white sauce. A magic hunter man with one arm who came here three months ago taught me about it. He was shrewd, unlike this Kon kid here even though they're both one-armed. Even though the price for this white sauce was quite exorbitant, I've had my money worth."
"Hey, don't liken me to that man with bad look on his face"
"Did you hear the name of that man?"
"Yeah, he said he was John Smith."

John Smith you say.
I asked about his characteristic, but the innkeeper only remembered that his face was chiseled, and he had black hair, and no left arm. I somehow assume that he's the third summoned person from Menea's kingdom.

"He disappeared from the town before anyone knew it."
"Maybe he was killed by monsters since he was a magic hunter."
"That man didn't seem like he would die so easily though."

The boy eat the fish set meal with his left arm skillfully.
He occasionally secretly looks at the whole roast of the deer meat enviously, then devours the fish set meal, so I put some deer meat on a small plate, and give it to him. It should be fine with this much.

Nana who has finished her meal earlier examines the entrance, and suddenly stands up.

Nana reinforces her physical strength while concealing her body, then moves so fast, your eyes can't caught her, to the entrance. Nana comes back with a big smile on her face while holding two ratkin children on both her arms. The children are struggling desperately to escape, but they're no match for the physically reinforced Nana.

"Master, I have safeguarded young organisms. Requesting permission to feed them."

What, feed them you say.
The three beastkin girls look like they've finished eating, and there are still a lot of the deer meat remaining anyway, so it should be alright. When I give the permission, Nana feeds the deer meat to the ratkin children while looking really happy. At first, the ratkin children were surprised themselves, but when they understood that they could eat, they began to eat like gulping down. After that, various things happened like Pochi who stuffed her throat after sensing the impending crisis, or Liza who preached the ratkin children as if she was going to eat them, but the dinner ended with a lively and fun atmosphere.

There are three people who will be guarding the separate building. They're quite unreliable since they don't have see-through skills on top of being level 5. Since the presences of these guards act as impediment for the thieves, it might be fine just like this.

Even though we're in an inn, I decide to have three rotations of night watches just like it's always been during the night camp.
I think I'm being too vigilant, but there's no one who restrains the subordinates of that stupid noble, so they might come attacking after all.

9-5. At the Town of Magic Hunters (4)

Satou's here. There are a lot of stories with revenge as their themes, but few of them end in happy endings due to the themes of the stories. I'll pay you back 10 times! The characters shout out their exasperation like so, but I wish they don't brood over it so gravely.

◇

"I said wait! That person is also a noble! He's not someone who would do bad things."
"Move out, Kon."
"That's right, we'll be given one silver coin by just joining the encirclement on the inn."
"Right, right, how many goblins do you think that is."
"Even a good-for-nothing like you can get some money you know? Only fools would miss this chance."

I'm hearing this conversation from the magic hunters who are gathering in the bar.
That arsonist noble is still trying to do something huh.

I check on the map, there are around 20 magic hunters gathered on the vacant lot near the governor's mansion. There are also as many young people beside the magic hunters, they seem to be a gathering of outlaws when I look closer. Considering there aren't any of the guards among them, looks like baronet Poton isn't involved this time.
There are about 42 people, but there aren't anyone who has magic skills, they're only warrior or thief types. Since their levels are only ranging from 2-7, even excluding me, they aren't matches against my companions.

The foreign noble is staying in the baronet's mansion without moving. I can guess why since the alchemists in this city are low leveled, as he's only at 30% of his max health, and his bone fractures are terrible, he won't be able to move even if he wants to.

At the bar in front of me, there are the one-armed magic hunter boy, Kon, the four magic hunter women who were with him before, and also eight magic hunter beastkins. This beastkin called Ord, and his friends are strong even among magic hunters as their levels are around 7-9. The other hunters here are level 2-7, not much differences than the magic hunters on the vacant lot.

"Ord and the others, please stop drinking and make nee-san and her friends stop."
"Isn't it alright, let them go."
"Wa, Ord!"

Apparently, the beastkins are neutral, and won't help the Kon boy.

"If you don't move away soon, I'll hit you with my fist."
"Please, nee-san."
"Kena, not gonna stop you though."
"What's this Ord, it's not like you to give advice to other magic hunters."
"This isn't an advice, but a warning. We're on the side of the noble at the inn. He's the benefactor of sis boss, and we've been requested to protect the inn noble by the assembly of the beastmen."

Hoo? Is it a thank for curing their burns? I don't know who is this sis boss, but she's probably one of the people who have been cured from the burn. If I didn't hear this conversation, they might become victims of my remote magic along with the magic hunters employed by the foreign noble.

Now then, I can't keep listening to them secretly forever can I.

"You serious? Ord, I know you guys are strong, but the opponents aren't just the twenties something magic hunters. There are also more than 50 guards right?"
"Don't worry about that. The guards won't come out."
"Who told you that? Your mother? Stay out of this!"

I cut into the conversation between the big rabbitkin man with one eye (Ord), and the leader of the women (Kena). Kena sharply spoke as if spitting out without turning around to me. Did she mistake me for some magic

hunter?

"I've stopped baronet Poton with the connection from the duchy capital. He won't let out the soldiers unless he's an unparalleled idiot who's all about ruins."

When I was talking, Kena and her companions turned around after noticing Ord's eye signal. The woman companions of Kena stands up and put their hands on the grips of their swords when they see me who's armed with a sword.
I introduce myself while waving to Kon boy who's being trampled by Kena's foot.

"Heya, nice to meet you. I am Chevalier Satou Pendragon."

I calmly look around the bar while introducing myself, and confirm the consistency of the information from the map.

"I didn't intend to eavesdrop, but I've heard your talk. You're--miss Kena right? Hopefully, you guys can accompany me in a drinking bout in this bar today."
"Drinking bout? Are you trying to coax us to become your friends?"
"I'm not. I've come here to gather the latest information about the mountain range beyond the farthest village."
"Hah, if you've heard our talk, then you should know the situation you're in right? Isn't it better for you to quickly move out of the inn to escape? If you ask Ord over there, he'll open the gate at least."

Oh, this is unexpected. I didn't think that she would give me advices. She was only tempted by the silver coins reward, she doesn't seem like a bad person. Then maybe I should ask them to help smash the path of retreat of that arsonist noble.

"I have something to discuss, is it alright?"

◇

The attack on the inn starts way past midnight.
I ask Pochi and Tama who have quickly noticed it to wake everyone up, and I stop doing handicraft that I've done to kill time.

Since everyone have taken naps with armors worn, the battle preparation is quickly completed. Since we're pretending to be sleeping, there is no light. I peep through the window on the third floor, there are three separate suspicious groups coming from the street. Kena and the others have successfully slipped in behind one of the group.

I asked the women to arrest the retainers of the foreign noble, or stop them from escaping.
They're caught red-handed attacking a noble of Shiga kingdom at night. It's unfortunate that the person himself isn't present, but he probably won't be able to escape getting deported outside the kingdom if I just pull some connections.

"Bows, three people~?" "There's also one on the shadow of the roof there, so it's four nanodesu."

Pochi and Tama who were watching outside found the archers. I shoot through the shoulders of the two, who have murders on their punishment (status), with a single shot from the crossbow. In addition, I use [Remote Stun] to make the other four fall unconscious. Since there wasn't anyone beside the archers, they probably don't know that they're being ambushed. I also use [Remote Stun] to neutralize the other people who seem to be thieves approaching nimbly from the roof. It was troublesome to match the timing as to not make them suffer serious injury from the falls.

"Then, shall we go."

Leaving Mia, and Arisa, the magicians, and Lulu who's holding the magic gun on the top floor, I bring the vanguards downstairs.
When we've arrived on the first floor, the guards of the inn who have finally noticed the unusual situation are furiously knocking the door to tell the state of emergency.
They looked surprised when they see us coming out fully armed, but I forcibly made them to go to the main building of the inn to protect it.

When the masses have encircled the inn, one of the retainers of the foreign noble step forward and begins his speech, or rather, proclaiming death sentences. Looks like these retainers are lower nobles.
However, doing speech here like this. What was the point of approaching here without light then.

"Upstart who has foolishly taken the side of the cursed white tigers!"

Is this guy a genuine idiot?

"Your sin is supporting the filthy beastkins!"

You shouldn't discriminate people by race.

"Your sin is injuring our great master, Dasles-sama!"

It's like speaking in unison during demonstration.
I thought that they shouldn't have said his name, but they may be thinking that they're not doing anything bad.

"Your sin is--"

I wonder if it's bad if I don't hear it until the end.
From what I can infer from the retainers' talk, it seems that even though marquis Dasles had taken the white tiger princess party, who were running from the weaselkin chase, under his care, they suddenly massacred the family of the marquis, stole his money and treasures, burned the houses of the citizens, and massacred the people. In addition, the late king who was visiting the mansion at that time was also killed too.

I'd like to say that then it can't be helped that he harbors grudges, but it's too unnatural. Killing your protectors bears nothing but disadvantages, and there's even more no reason for them for burning and killing the people. Instead, it's easier to understand if you presume that the weaselkin who would be in trouble if the late king helped humans and tigerkin to join hands, so they laid the blame to the white tigerkin princess and her cohorts.

Well, regardless of the situation, they still have to be dealt, so the details don't matter.

I open the gate on the courtyard from the inside, and come out before them.

"Aren't you satisfied yet? Your speech is too long, the outlaws around you would grow tired y'know?"
"You're making a fool of yourself. I'll make you regret for deliberately appearing from the other side of the wall. Do it! Slaughter this guy!"

The man who was having a speech comfortably gives the order while his face is reddening in anger. The outlaws around reply that by taking out their weapons. They sure are excited~
Kena and her friends slip beside the two retainers of the foreign noble who are behind the mass. Those two have higher rank than the one who was giving speech.

"You DTs, declaring that I will be your opponent."
<TLN: DT=Doutei=virgin guy.>

Nana provocated the outlaws who were attacking, and then jumped out. There's no sense in that right? Yet, several people are facing Nana, so it might be effective.

Pochi and Tama activate [Shell] on their magic swords, and mow the outlaws down like we're in a gag manga.
Nana who puts on physical reinforcement pushes several people with her large shield, and repulses the magic hunter who has a great axe with her [Shell]-activated magic sword, she's quite reliable.

And, Liza pierces the shoulder of the retainer who was giving speech earlier with her spear while leaving red afterglow.

Eh?
Red afterglow?

Wait, Liza?
When I look at Liza's condition while feeling uneasy, she's just put too much fighting spirit into it. She didn't really activate magic edge, so the retainer didn't die.

Thanks to that injury, the other outlaws have also begin to run away as if

it's an effect of the punishment.

"O, oy, isn't that a magic spear."
"Those three are also magic sword users."
"Oy, oy, I didn't sign up for this. Like I'd fight those guys even though I'm not a knight."

A lot of the outlaws turn their back and flee.
I'm fine with leaving anyone but ones with serious crimes, but they've been neutralized after Mia shot [Mustard Bomb], and Tama threw stones toward them who had stopped while coughing violently.

I knock out the two retainers whom Kena has caught with the fairy sword while in its scabbard and have them arrested. Kon who's sprawling on his feet doesn't seem have any serious injury too.

By the way, the outlaws on the opposite side of the inn have been arrested by Ord and the others with cover fires from Arisa and Lulu.

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"S, sir Pendragon! What is this uproar so late at night."

I've come to the mansion of baronet Poton while bringing along the outlaws who have been tied together with the retainers of the foreign noble. The first speech of the baronet when he saw us was that. Apparently, the uproar this time doesn't have anything to do with the baronet. However, let's follow Arisa's advice, and act as if the baronet involvement has been decided to make him run toward his own self-protection.

"You said that as if you weren't involved yourself. The retainers of that Dasles had brought these many outlaws to attack the inn where was staying."

Ah, I really can't get used to this noble-like speech.

"Wa, it doesn't have anything to do with me. I'm unrelated."

Alright, I only have to make him arrest the foreign noble and take him to the duchy capital, and it'll be a mission complete.
However, the situation advances outside my expectation.

"So you've even harmed our retainers, you pawns of tigerkins! It can't be helped like this, I'll take care of you with my own hands!."

Dasles comes out while shaking and supporting himself with a cane. Since his coat is only hanging on his shoulders, I can see many bandages covering the upper half of his body. The fool started to chant fire magic, so I threw the nut that I had prepared beforehand on his head.
When Dasles kneels on the ground, the guards who finally react, pin the guy to the ground.

"Baronet Poton. Just now, Dasles had tried to shoot fire bolt toward me with clear intention to kill. Moreover, you were beside him. As a governor, you have to give your judgment."
"S, someone with low rank like me cannot give death penalty. First, we have to transport him to the duchy capital, drag him to the royal capital from there, and entrust the judgment to the king."

Oh, he can't be punished at the duchy capital huh.
Since he could meet the white tigerkins if he goes to the royal capital, I'd like for him to be prisoned at the duchy capital. Well, whatever.

"You've heard him. Guards! Arrest that criminal quickly. The ring on his right hand is a tool for invocation. Don't forget to take it off."

You can actually invoke magic without invocation tool, but the power of the magic and accuracy considerably fall.
Moreover, there's a tool for rogue magician in the baronet mansion, Dasles is tied with something called [Chain of Magic Seal]. If he tries to chant spell, the mana will flows to the chain of magic seal and get dispersed, although it cannot always prevent it.

They put Dasles who's struggling while being tied with the chain of magic seal to the underground dungeon.

It's case closed with this huh.
I can just leave the treatment of baronet Poton to marquis Lloyd at the duchy capital.

Now then, I guess I'll go back to the inn and take a nap.

9-6. At the Town of Magic Hunters (5)

Satou's here. 'Rewarding goods, and punishing evils' reminds me of period dramas, but unexpectedly, it also exists in novels and manga. Of course even in the tale of another world.

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Early in the morning the next day, that marquis Dasles and his retainers are to be transported to the duchy capital together by ship. Since they could try to escape, about 20 guards are accompanying them.

Looks like they'll be transfered to a large ship on the town before the great river.

Now then, there's actually quite a complicated reason as to why baronet Poton was accommodating marquis Dasles.
First, marquis Dasles seemed to carry a letter of introduction from the previous earl Bobi at the duchy capital. With the backing of the previous earl Bobi, he earned the cooperation of a certain organization in the duchy territory.
And, it seemed that the son of baronet Poton who went to the school at the duchy capital admired this organization. There'd have been no problem if it ended with that, but this organization was the [Wings of Liberty], and he was in the wanted list from the duke, so it was a bit problematic.

Even though his son was put in the wanted list, that didn't mean that he would be relieved of his duty as a governor, but there were many people who wanted his position, so it was very possible that someone would use it to drag him down.

And, at that time, the fact that the son of baronet Poton was a part of [Wings of Liberty] wasn't well-known.

Furthermore, it seems that this son is safe and currently taking shelter at

the other hunting mansion of earl Bobi house at the duchy capital. Of course, if the authority at the duchy capital find out about the location, the son will be arrested, and probably executed later.

Thus, marquis Dasles held the cards for the [Scandal], and the [Life] of baronet Poton's son, and forced the cooperation and submision of baronet Poton.

Of course, he didn't openly talk about this at first.

He told various excuses like he was threatened with fire magic, he had a debt from the person who introduced the marquis, earl Bobi, or that got some bribes, but since they were all full of holes, he finally confessed after I raised the Interrogation skill to maximum.

I've made a deal with him.

Normally, I should have reported to the duke and the kingdom authority about the remnants of the [Wings of Liberty] holed up at the hunting mansion, but I decide to leave it to marquis Lloyd as the leader of the faction to deal with them. As expected, I cannot overlook them.

Marquis Lloyd might try to hide the scandal of his faction, but I expect him to dispose the remnants of the [Wings of Liberty] in the process.
Marquis Lloyd will probably rescind baronet Poton as a governor of this town, but at least he can avoid the worst scenario where this is used by his political opponents to execute or deprive him of his peerage.

Since I've sent a letter for marquis Lloyd pertaining the details, the issue with baronet Poton will probably gradually subside in time.

Now then, I demanded three things from him.

First, distribute the fortunes of the arsonist noble to his victims as the reimbursements.
Second, establish an orphanage in this town.
Third, establish a place for the young magic hunters to train under the retired ones.

He had shown disapproval for the third, but we compromised by making it monthly course instead of permanent one. Since it's for the sake of decreasing loss among the magic hunters, it's (the course) probably going to be alright even if the governor change.

I didn't expect that he accepted the second one easily, but it seemed that there was an orphanage that opened until the end of service of the previous governor, so the building itself still remains at the outskirt of the town. The fund for the orphanage stopped once the governor changed, but since I requested it in the letter for the marquis Lloyd, it's probably going to be alright. It's a request through and through. I'm not coercing him.

Now then, as for the management of everyone who has attacked the inn, they're all turned into slaves.
Of course it doesn't apply to the people who I've asked to infiltrate.

The outlaws that have attacked the inn, and most magic hunters are turned into crime slaves.
However, if too many of the magic hunters were decreased, this town's main specialty, magic cores gathering would stagnate, and so the ones who didn't have offenses before the incident were picked from the ones who had first-class crimes, and turned into common slaves with time limit instead.
The ones who become common slaves are to work under the official of Puta town, and their terms as slaves are decreased in exchange for their compulsion to hunt monsters.

Lastly, I actually got a lot of things from the incident this time.

First, I got equipments confiscated from marquis Dasles, and the money that he had used to pay the assailants, moreover, I also got some of the money from selling the crime slaves to the slave trader.
The latter aside, I don't know why the former comes to me. When I inquired, it wasn't bribes, but payments for capturing criminals from the administration. Ah, confusing.

To be honest, I didn't need the money, but I thought that I could just distribute it after, so I accepted it.

As rewards for this incident, I gave several bottles of diluted potion, and

some silver coins for Kena, Ord, and the others. Kena and the women were pondering hard whether to sell the potions for money, but in the end they decided to keep it. Life can't be replaced after all.

I also intended to split it among the victims of Dasles who had their houses burnt, but they gratefully refused.
Instead, I got several baskets of nuts and medicinal plants that they've gathered in the forest first thing in the morning. Since it seem to be thanks for the medicine yesterday, I gratefully accept it. I make baked sweets from those nuts, and pass it to Pochi and Tama for them to share it among the children. The two came back totally exhausted, so it must've been accepted delightfully. Since Nana who had gone with the two looked glossy even while being expressionless, there were a lot of children it seems.

It's decided that baronet Poton is going to pay for the compensations of the villages that Dasles has attacked, so there's nothing in that front from me.

And also, I don't know who's spread the rumor, but it seems that it has been decided that I like tomatoes. Merchants come visit me to the inn while bringing a lot of tomatoes as presents.
There are different kinds of tomatoes than the one at the harbor mixed in, but tomatoes aren't going to be unneeded no matter how many I have, so I gratefully accept them.

However, I firmly refused the suggestion to have a bronze statue of me, as the town's celebrity, put on the harbor. As expected, something like a bronze statue is too embarrassing. They asked me to receive at least the [Puta Citizens Medal of Honor], so I accepted it.

Do the people of this world like medal or something?

◇

"Oh, it moved! It moved just now right?"
"Yeah, if you keep it up, you'd be able to move it like I've displayed earlier, work hard."
"Un, thank you! noble-sama."

Even though it was something that I made to kill time while waiting for the raid, it's working properly huh.

I've given a simple artificial arm made of wood to Kon boy.

The artificial arm has mitten-like part that has movable fingers. When you spread mana on the artificial arm, the magic circuit on the joints will react and the wire will be winded and move the the fingers. If you stop the mana supply, the spring board will spring into action, and the hand will open. Since the opening and the closing response is slow, it's probably impossible to hold weapons to fight with it.

You can also wind it manually for the possibility that he can't handle the mana well. Of course I've also made the lock function.

This artificial arm is a bonus for Kon boy. If he didn't do his best, Ord and the others who were acting in behalf of me would have been included among the criminals.

I've also left him with a leather armor and boots from wolf leather, and also a breast plate and a helmet made from the shell of rhinoceros beetles that are strong for its lightness. I've also made a shield from the rhinoceros beetle shell that can be attached on the joint of the artificial arm.

Since his weapon is a keepsake from his father, I only fix it by sharpening it.

"Uwaa, is it fine, this many! Look at me nee-san, I'm like an explorer!"
"However, if a beginner like you have these kind of equipments, won't the idiots take them away from you?"
"It's going to be alright, I didn't use expensive materials."

Kena is slightly concerned toward the boy who is honestly rejoicing.
I've thought so at this time, but in the future, I find out that these shells of rhinoceros beetle are unexpectedly expensive materials in the labyrinth city. Since the rumor that these materials aren't expensive spread in this city, it's probably alright.

"Then, then, make some for us too."

"I'll reward you with my body."
"If it's your body, far from rewards, you'd need to pay him instead."
"How cruel! It's no different than yours."

Since I've expected these fussy reactions, I've already made breastplates from the rhinoceros beetle shells to give them. They're just simple enlarged Japanese archery-type chest protectors that can be attached to leather armors.

Of course they're not free.

In exchange, I ask them to bring Kon boy together to hunt monsters, it's fine for just one month. In this world, if there's an opportunity, and you can survive, it should be easy to level up.

I feel a bit too busybody, but it's fine if it's just this much.

That's why, Arisa, stop that grinning.

◇

Several days after the raid, we're finally able to depart Puta town.
The wagon would be buried by nuts and tomatoes if we stay any longer.

"Then, young organisms, we'll be parting briefly."
"Nana, you go? You're going?"
"Nana, won't stay together? You can't?"
"Nana, don't go."

After saying goodbye to the 3-5 children, Nana mounts the horse.
I've thought that she'd want to take 1-2 of them, this is unexpected.

"They are in a base now. I have judged that the journey is dangerous for young organisms' life."

By 'base', she probably means the provisional orphanage.
Although the bed are just only spread mats, it's better than sleeping under

the hanging roof outside people's houses, or under the trees. There are around 50 orphans, whom Nana has gathered from the downtown, living in the provisional orphanage. The orphans are actually three times that number, but we weren't able to gather them all.

I was going to donate several gold coins to the caretakers of the orphanage, but they gently declined it. There doesn't seem to be any place where gold coins can be used in this city. It couldn't be helped, so I donated 100 kilograms of rice and 100 copper coins. I pray that they won't embezzle it.

We leave the town with the grand farewell from the children, the beastkins, and the magic hunters.
Several fast children are running in parallel with the wagon, but they quickly become tired, and get left behind.

Nana seems to turns her head toward the city several times as if she's reluctant to part.

The wagon continues on the highway, or more like an animals trail overgrown with grasses.
First, toward the farthest village, then cross the mountain range on the southeast toward the forest of Bornean.

9-7. Highway of Weeds

Satou's here. I liked science experiments during my primary and middle school days. Among them, I was really thrilled with electrolysis that separates oxygen and hydrogen. I feel that making up magic tools bring the same kind of excitement as these days.

◇

Not less than half a day after we've passed through the farthest village with population of 200 people, the road begins to be overgrown with weeds and can't be seen.

"The road's condition is just like we've heard isn't it. Are we really going to advance on this road?"
"Yeah, let's cut it for now."
"Leave it to me~" "I'll work hard nodesu!"

I got off the wagon while saying so, Pochi and Tama chased after me after taking grass sickles from the toolbox in the wagon. After posing as if 'clink'-like sfx written on the background, they begin to push their way through the thickets.

No, you girls, I'm going to use magic here?
Since the two are so eager while looking like they're having so much fun, I can't bring myself to stop them. I guess I'll wait until they're tired.

"Master, permission to participate the strategy meeting. Reporting for a different style of grass cutting."

I don't know if the figures of Tama and Pochi cutting the weeds touched Nana's heartstrings or something, but I took out a long grass sickle and pass it to her.

"Master, it looks like the three are motivated to cut the weeds with the

sickles, but we don't know how long until we arrive to the base of the mountain. How about we hire the people from the village earlier to cut through it, or spread oil and burn the weeds?"
"It'll be bad if it turns into forest fire, so the burning is forbidden. I'll cut them with magic after Pochi and the others are tired."

That reminds me, I heard that Mia created road in the forest during their way to Muno city back then, but when I asked her, she replied, "Impossible". She can probably only use it for a short course.

Since there are ingredients for medicines and cuisines mixed among the weeds, I leave Arisa and Mia to gather them. I ask Lulu and Liza to prepare for lunch.

"I wonder what~ is that?"
"Hmm? It's a kiln."

Since I saw characters in the manga I had read a long time ago baked pizza with a kiln, I made this one by using earth and fire magic. I must say that I've done a good job for an improvised thing. Even though it's simple, to be able to make it faster than making a cup ramen is too wonderful.

While having a sidelong glance to Arisa who's fallen to the ground with a dry smile, I take out the pizza dough that I've left fermenting in the Item Box.
I take out the tomato sauce I've made in Puta city and spread it on the pizza dough. As for the toppings, there are cheese of course, and also bacon and salami that are standard for pizza, I've also another type of pizza with lots of vegetables like sliced tomato, asparagus, eggplant, and paprika.

Since the pizza dough is thin, seem that it won't be enough to satisfy the appetites of hara heri girls. I guess I'll make some cube steak and french fries as the side menu.

"It stretches~?" "Hot hot, nanodesu."
"Uwa wa, stupid good~"
"Nn, delicious."

The juvenile troupe are awfully excited, looks like they like the pizza. Pochi

and Tama get sticky from the dripping cheeses, they have to wash their faces later.
Lulu and Nana seem to like it too, but not to the degree like the four. After eating one slice of the pizza, Liza sets her sight to the unmarked cube steak. She's really unwavering.

I'm glad that they're eating it happily, but I stop Arisa who looks like she'd eat too much. She looks at me reproachfully, but she seems to understand after I explain about the dreadfulness of rebound. The diet back then was hard after all.
That's why Arisa. Please stop looking like that at Pochi and the others eating pizza.

◇

Since Pochi and the others are satisfied, I decide to open the path with magic from the afternoon.

First, I fire [Air Blade] that follows close to the surface of the ground along the road.
The wind released from the short wand cuts the weeds while leaving 10 centimeters of it above the ground. The wind continues on while cutting some slightly elevated grounds, and bushes along the way. In the end, it finally stops 200 meters ahead on a small five meters tall cliff.

"You, you really should learn to stop overdoing it."
"Nn, destruction of nature."

Was it too shocking, Arisa grumbled with more unreserved tone than usual. Is it because you're scolding me that Liza is taking regretful pose.

The fact that the trees along the road are cut is within my expectation, but for even the cliff to be cut in two and crumbles is beyond my expectation.

If we advance just like this, the horses can sprain their legs from the unseen ramp, and soft grounds, so I decide to prepare the soil with earth magic.

This time I'm not using [Wall], but the very thing itself, that is [Flat Land] magic. Seems it's a magic that's used frequently by not only the army, but also the general populace. It was a magic from the scroll that I had bought from the firs magic shop I visited in the duchy capital, but I didn't have opportunity to use it until now.

I set the range to be the course of the road and exercise the magic. Since the ground is covered by weeds, I don't know if the soil really has been prepared, so I check the terrain on the map. Looks like it's been leveled without problem.

Since the cut weeds are hindering the horses feet, the wagon isn't speeding up. The wheels are also looking like they'll slide. I instruct the wagon to running slowly at only several kilometers per hours speed, we're going while opening the path anyway.

I'm leading while using magic, and Pochi and Tama who are walking while picking up herbs and medicinal plants from the cut weeds. Liza and Nana are removing bushes and fallen trees that are out of bounds from the road. Arisa and Mia are sorting the gathered materials.

However, it'll inevitably take some time. Naturally, the road to the mountain range is not just extending straight, and not flat as there are undulations too. Particularly, the road goes around hills, low-laying mountains, and valleys.

Since I don't have any other good plan, we're advancing on while opening the highway, and I decide to camp on the bank of the streamlet 10 kilometers ahead.
Although there are around 20 demi-goblins 1 kilometers away from the planned camping ground, they seem to have become frightened by the sound of vegetations cutting and ran away very fast. It's going to be safe tonight.

I left the dinner preparation to Lulu and went back to the place where I started to clear the path, I put a rough 100 meters wide mud wall [Wall] there. With this, there won't be strange rumor about the road that suddenly appears.

◇

That night, I've assembled an aerodynamic engine that's been half completed.

However, the control is difficult.

After it was finished, it did float when I tried to put mana into it little by little, but it was bad after that.

After the engine fed on a certain amount of mana, it rotates down to the ground with a plop, and then it powerfully plunges to the nearby tree.

Apparently, the fins that are composed on the aerodynamic engine each has its own fixed output on top of having the so-called power band. Due to that, you can't just pour mana into like normal magic tools as it will rotate off-balance and accelerate suddenly.

Looks like it needs a control circuit for tuning the output, but there's nothing about that in the documents I have at hand. There isn't also anything about how the control of aerodynamic engine is difficult written in the documents, don't tell me that the author of this document actually hasn't assembled the engine himself.

"Or maybe the control itself isn't something that's impossible to do?"

Although the frame of the engine that has hit the trees and the shrubs are broken, the fins and the magic circuit themselves are fine, so I'm going to challenge it again. I can more or less make the aerodynamic engine floats for about 30 seconds, but since I have to concentrate on it all the time, it's too bothersome. If it's like this, even lifting the wagon with [Magic Hand] is better.

I'm searching for any other hints until late at night.

◇

The following day, we're going to travel by air.

Of course it's not like I've found some breakthrough way to control the aerodynamic engine.
I've just switched my way of thinking--that's a bit presumptuous.

If it can't be done with magic, then I can just make use of science!

I've only noticed that.
I've become too reliant with magic just because I'm able to create some magic tools. I'm just going to make normal balloons and use them to travel in the air.

Although it was hard after I got the idea.

At first I wanted to make hot-air balloons, but when I thought about the number of the people and the horses, I abandoned the idea. It's a bit too heavy.

Therefore I decided to fill it with light gas like blimps.
The problem is the material for the balloon. When I was doing the preliminary calculation, it seemed that it was necessary to make an ark big enough to carry people and horses in the air.
I search through the storage, and the parts from the parasites of the great monstrous fish seem usable. The specimen that stole life until it became level 50 had particularly grown quite big, so I'm going to use it.

Since there wasn't place that was convenient enough, I flew back to the open space in the underground labyrinth at the duchy capital. The place is not the one I usually use, but on the lower floor that's half submerged in water.
I've decided to make the balloon for the blimp, and the hydrogen for the buoyancy here.

I successfully made the balloons from the parts of the parasites, but I couldn't make something too big, only ones with just enough length. Thus, I decided to make small balloons with one meter diameter and stuff them

into a big web.

To create the hydrogen, I make use of [Pure Water], [Discharge], and [<<Electronic Control>>] magic. Since I use [Air Control] to prevent the separated gas from mixing, it's progressing relatively well.

I might as well store the oxygen I've separated into different balloons.

I made a mistake during the operation once and the balloon exploded, but since I immediately deployed [Air Shield] at once, there wasn't any victim like burning clothes, although I was a bit surprised. I'm glad that it's a sturdy labyrinth. It's worth the trouble of going far.
Since the force of hydrogen explosion was greater than I expected, I combined the hide of the great monstrous fish and armored newt's bones to make fire and blast proof ceiling on the ark. The hide of the great monstrous fish are something that I've taken when I was cutting the meat. Since the hypodermis is thick, I only use the epidermis this time.
I make another hydrogen balloon explode as a test, looks like it can defend against it without problem.

I go back to the place where I experiment with the aerodynamic engine, place the ark on the trees around the area, and attach the balloons on it.

I go toward the camping ground while imagining everyone's face when they see the airship.

9-8. Air Travel

Satou's here. I've boarded airplanes for business trips before, but I've never ridden on a flying blimp. I have made some hot-air balloon in my school days, but there are many different things between a dummy model and the real thing.

◇

"Hey, won't you raise the altitude? Don't the beasts that hang around the treetops will want to get on the airship?"
"Nah, it's alright."

Arisa's concern is right on mark.
Actually, the airship has been jumped on twice since its departure by beasts that are brimming with curiosity. Of course since it was dangerous, I stopped their momentum with [Magic Hand] by matching the timing when they were about to jump.
All kinds of birds are also coming, but since none of them is like the crow from western anime with beak that looks dangerous for the balloons, I leave them alone.

Thinking for if the airship crash, the airship is advancing only slightly higher than the top of the trees.
I use [Air Control] magic to propel the airship forward. Since it's not originally a magic for flying an airship, the airship only flies at 15 km/h max. Since there's a high probability that the web holding the balloons breaking if I use [Air Cannon] like I've done when I was using Sky Drive, I won't use the magic.

The speed itself is slow, but since it's going in a straight line, the airship covers more distance than the wagon.

I fold the wagon's canopy and put it inside the airship ark along with the horses. I've thought of putting the wagon into the storage, but since the

airship can float just fine with it, I leave it outside.

I've made observation windows on all directions in the ark. Even though I've said windows, they're just holes with covers. I've made the side wall higher than the horses. The ceiling, or rather a protective wall, that's separating the blimp and the ark is made of the great monstrous fish's material.

Tama has climbed and sat on that side wall, she has been watching the passing scenery since a while ago. It's dangerous, but since I will pick her before she hits the ground even if she falls, I let her do as she pleases. Tama probably won't fall.

Nana seems to be gazing outside from the rear window. Even though Nana herself seems to think that the rear scenery is the cutest, I don't understand just how is it cute. The day where I can understand it might come soon.

Arisa, Mia, and Lulu who don't have anything to do are playing ayatori since awhile ago. Putting aside Arisa and Mia, I didn't expect Lulu to not be afraid.

And then, whenever Tama leans forward out of curiosity, the ship sway--

"Tama, it's dangerous nodesu! What would we do if we fall nodesuka!"
"That's right! Tama, behave yourself. Sky, we're up in the sky. We can't fly if we fall you know?"

Pochi who is sitting on my lap while I'm sitting on a captain-like chair, and Liza who's holding the back of my chair diagonally behind me without moving an inch warn, or rather, reproach Tama.

"It's alright~"

Tama answers in her own pace.

"I, it's not alright nodesu. Master! Don't laugh, put your hand here nanodesu. It'll be dangerous if you don't hold on properly nodesu."
"You hear me, Tama. It's punishment time if we fall to the ground you know?"

Seems Pochi and Liza aren't good with air travel.
Their voices have been seriously scared since a while ago. I've already expected Pochi to be scared, but I didn't even expect Liza to be frightened.

Whenever the airship shakes, Pochi jolts and petrified on my lap. Pochi's ears are closing down since a while ago. Looks like she's still uneasy with just sitting on my lap, she makes me put my hand on her stomach.
Liza aren't only holding the chair, she's also secretly clutching the sleeves of my clothes. I pretend not to notice it.

Of course Tama's lightweight body isn't enough to incline the ship.
The culprit is me.

Since Tama was leaning her body like she was going to fall, I used [Magic Hand] to match it and shook the airship, but for some reason, it wasn't Tama, but Pochi and Liza who were overreacting.
Since Pochi's reaction is cute, I've done it a few more times inadvertently, but let's refrain myself now.

◇

Now then, even though it looks like it's going smoothly, there are more problems with air travel than I've expected.

The first problem is about toilet.
I intend to build it during the camping tonight, but for now, I'm going to carry the members down one-by-one with sky drive in regular interval.
I wanted to carry many at once, but instead I was made to carry them with princess carry one-by-one somehow.

The second problem is meal.
Since fire isn't allowed, we're going to have a meal with bento I've made in the morning.

"Chicks~?"
"Uwaa, it's chicks nanodesu!"
"Flowers."

The three seem to be really happy as they show me the inside of the lunch boxes.
Err, I'm the one who made those.

Pochi's and Tama's shares are patterned with chicks, Mia has chicken rice without the chicken and vegetables in the shape of flowers.

"You're really~ hardworking aren't you. I didn't think that I would see characters bento here (this world)."
"Ara, even Arisa likes this one better after all?"

Lulu makes fun of Arisa who's looking amazed.

"Will it break if I eat it~?"
"Is it okay to eat this?"
"It's okay, they're food after all."
"Nn."
"Look really delicious~."

The two who are looking at the character bento and me alternatively in delight and anguish look cute. Mia seems to hesitate as to where to start. Except for these three's bento, the dish for everyone is the same, though there are individual differences. Liza gets a lot of meat, while it's lighter for Lulu and me.

"Pochi, Tama! I will safeguard those characters bento. If you eat something that cute--"

It was a failure of me for not anticipating this kind of reaction from Nana for the characters bento.

"You can't~"
"You can't nanodesu."

As it will be dangerous if the horses get agitated if they make a ruckus in the narrow ark, I raise the three of them with [Magic Hand] to stop the racket.

"Master, this is an unfair capture. Requesting liberation."

"You made a ruckus in the narrow ark, so you're guilty."
"Please reconsider!"
"No. Eat in the air just like that for today."

Good grief, we can finally continue the meal now.
I'll make characters bento for Nana too tomorrow. No, maybe it's better if I don't make characters bento while we're traveling by air.

"Master."

Nana isn't giving up today--

Whatisshedoingiwonder?

Using unthinkable sexy technique, she slips out of the restrain.
Nana is approaching Pochi and Tama while her top is bare, but the two seem to have finished their meals. The lunch boxes might have been too small.

Lulu puts a cloth on Nana who's fallen down and placed her hands on the floor.

Using sexy technique like that, she's grown up.
No, that's not it. That is not it. I have to lecture her later. Yup, let's put the scene earlier in the folder inside my brain. Pictures aren't crime.

Of course I didn't use the photography magic.

◇

The third problem is that it attracts attentions.

Since we're deep in the mountain, there's no need to worry with people, but there seem to be curious monsters and animals as they are following from behind without letting go.

We've arrived at the base of the mountain in the second day, but it was hard

to clean up the animals that had gathered when we went down to the camp ground yesterday. Since Pochi and the others were happy with, "Prey!", let's treat it as a good thing.

Originally, it should be unexpectedly hard to ascend and descend with something like an airship. That is because you need to adjust the buoyancy. However, in our case, since the buoyancy decreases if I put the balloons into the storage, we can easily descend. After putting away some amount of the balloons, I can use [Air Control] until we descend to the ground, and then I can retrieve them all afterwards.

Today, the airship is anchored on the side of a lake.
Since the part with the balloons is about 20 meter wide, it's hard to find a place to put it down. Today I lower it on the water surface and retrieve the balloons.

After putting the airship on the bank, Liza and the others immediately intercept the monster. The opponent is the Horn Snake that has been running in parallel with the airship ark since a while ago. Since Arisa and Mia are backing them, I prepare the dinner together with Lulu.

After everyone is done with the hunt, let's go on a stroll around the lake by riding horses while also making them exercise.

◇

"Arisa! Hold back the snake's attack for moment. Nana!　When the snake stops moving, put your shield up again."

They seem to have an unexpectedly hard fight.
Pursuing Liza and Nana, the snake that's come breaking out of the forest is quite big. I can't see how many meters is its length, but it's at least as thick as Mia's waist.

The horn is between its eyes pointing straight about 50 centimeters long. This snake's horn seems to have paralyzing poison, but before that, you're going to be seriously injured if you're pierced by this horn.

I'm on alert while deploying [Magic Hand], and [Flexible Shield] so that I can intervene anytime.

The snakes stands up forming sickle-shaped neck about 3 meters high, and as Nana is about to assault it, Arisa keeps the snake in check with the space magic [Isolation]. This magic seems to make a wall out of space gaps, but it's quite fragile. When we tried it before, I broke it by just hitting it without even using [Magic Break]. Arisa was somehow mad, but wasn't it alright since it was an experiment.
According to Arisa, one should have needed to use [Magic Break] or [<<Remove Isolation>>] of the same space magic to destroy this [Isolation] magic.
As for me, I feel that I can destroy magic that intervenes with [The Other Space] like shadow magic or summoning magic just fine.

Leaving that aside, Nana puts up [Shield] again, and seems to have finished chanting [Sharp Edge].

Arisa removes the barrier, and the second round begins.
First, Mia fires off [Water Cutter], but the horn snake easily avoids it.
Continuing on, Nana executes provocation.

"Now, come! I declare, I'll make you realize that you don't have arms or legs."
<TLN: Japanese idiom for 'can't do anything.'>

No well, snakes don't have arms or legs.
The horn snake uses its horn to repeatedly stabs at Nana. Pochi and Tama are attacking from the sides aiming for its body, but their attacks don't quite reach since the tail obstructs them.

Liza activates magic edge and is taking a posture to attack, at that time--

That thing appears from the shadow of the forest.

--It's not aiming for fisherman's profit right?

9-9. Fisherman's Profit

Satou's here. During the midsummer day of the ox, it's nice to be able to eat something that you don't usually eat like kabayaki, or winter solstice pumpkin, isn't it. Although, there are arguments from both side when it's about valentine day...
<TLN: From wiki, Kabayaki (蒲焼) is a preparation of fish, especially unagi eel, where the fish is split down the back (or belly), gutted and boned, butterflied, cut into square fillets, skewered, dipped in a sweet soy sauce-base sauce before being broiled on a grill.>

◇

The thing that appears in the forest sky is a wyvern.

Its aim is not us, but the horn snake, as it's swooping down on the defenseless body of the horn snake while completely ignoring us.

The horn snake which was obstinately attacking Nana seems to notice it too, it stops its attack and turns its sickle neck towards the wyvern.

"Liza, leave this to me."
"Yes! Pochi, Tama, take some distance. Arisa, Mia! Use attack magic while the horn snake stops moving."

I strike the wyvern from the side with the short stun that I haven't used for a long time.

It didn't seem to think that we would attack it, the magic hit it directly and it crashed to the forest, mowing down several trees along the way.
The wing span of this wyvern is about 10 meters long. Rather than a dragon, it looks more like a Pteranodon. It's really like a fantasy wyvern to have poison on its tail.
<Rathalos approves>

The horn snake gets half of its body cut by Arisa's [<<Dimension Cutter>>], and its blood grandly scatters. Mia attacked the horn snake with [Water Blade] slightly later, but it seemed that the snake had resisted it as the water dispersed when it hit the body surface.

The horn snake, which didn't expect to suffer great damages, began to try to escape.
Of course Liza and the others won't allow it.

"Nana, we can't let the horn snake runs away."
"Understood. You snake, the preparation for making kabayaki is complete!"

Thanks to Nana's questionable provocation, and the barrier that Arisa had put on its retreat path, the horn snake had stopped trying to escape. Liza's magic spear, and Pochi's and Tama's short swords alternately attack the wound that Arisa has opened.
And then, when the snake movements has become dulled due to the blood loss, Nana pierces through its mouth with the [Sharp Edge]-strengthened sword, and it stops moving.

"Ey ey." "Ou nanodesu."

Pochi and Tama are having victory cry on top of the horn snake, but it's still too early.

"Pochi, Tama, you must not relax your guard. Nana, use the reinforcement magic again. Arisa, Mia, do you still have enough mana?"

Liza gives instructions, and the preparation for the next battle begins.
She's quite reliable.

Since Nana, who's in charge of the front line, is slightly hurt, I heal her with [Water Heal].

◇

Slightly later after that, a kaiju-like roar comes out from the deep of the

forest. Apparently, the wyvern has finally awoken. I was cautious as to whether it could use magic by roaring like demons, but it seemed to be just a normal cry.

The advantage of wyverns is their flight ability.

Thus I thought that it would go out to the lake shore to accelerate in order to fly, but---

"Wait, that's a wyvern right?"
"Monkey~?"
"It's bouncing around nodesu."

The wyvern ran up two trees by kicking them alternately, and flew to the sky like that. Seemed that it properly used its talons to gain speed while running on the trees.

I pass some crossbows to Pochi, Tama and Lulu. They're originally anti-wyvern tools. Let's put them to use.

The wyvern is circling in the sky to amass speed, then it lower its altitude and comes attacking from the other side of the lake. It's not breaking through to the center, but looks like it's gliding while grazing the lake surface.

"Mia, strike the wyvern with [Balloon] when it reaches that bush over there. The three of you attack the wing--yes, aim at the right wing. Arisa, use the cutting magic from before on its wing. I don't mind if you cut it whole if you can."

Liza has given instructions to everyone.
Previously, it was Arisa who instructed them, but since she couldn't do it while concentrating on magic, Liza took her place.

I also set up [Magic Hand] and [<<Flexible Shield>>].
Usually I won't interfere, but since this wyvern is level 33, and the snake earlier is level 24, I'm ready to support them anytime.
When the wyvern was nearing the bush, water vapor that suddenly erupted broke its posture. The timing was a bit late, so it didn't seem like its posture

got completely broken.

"Mwuu."

I pat and gently brush the head of Mia who's slightly pouting.
Following her, Arisa's [<<Dimension Cutter>>] hit the wyvern, it only scratched its shoulder, either because her level was too low, or because it was resisted.

The bolts that Pochi and Tama have fired at the same time only shallowly injure the tip of the wyvern's nose. Lulu's bolt seems to have flown toward the day after tomorrow. It's hard to hit a flying object even if it's flying straight to you after all.

Looking at this, I guess the opponent is a bit too much?

Nana blocks the wyvern attack with the [Shield] that she's put in front of her, and her own big shield. The wyvern is probably accustomed to combat as it's not using head-butt, but its talons to attack from the side. Since Nana's health gauge is rapidly decreasing, I quickly put the flexible shield between them. Mia has begun chanting to heal Nana, so I entrust it to her.

The wyvern kicks Nana once again and then goes back to the sky. Liza's thrust seems to have grazed its foot, but it doesn't seem to give much damage. I use ground shrink to catch Nana who was hurled away. There's not enough softness. Damn you armor.
Mia has joined the wyvern pursuit, so I heal Nana with my magic.

The bolts from the crossbows, and the attack magic successfully hit the wyvern by aiming for when it's slowing down while trying to go back to the sky. Lulu's bolt seemed to have hit it too. She's taking a triumphant pose beside me, so I congratulate her.

However, the wyvern only suffers some small injury, it's not enough to defeat it.

Seems that it has recognized us as formidable foes, it begins to aim for weaker individual. It's coming for Arisa while not slowing down, trying to catch her with the talons on its hind legs. Nana provokes it, but its aim is

unmoving.

As expected, I can't call this a training if a victim falls. I move in front of Arisa with ground shrink and kick the wyvern.
Since it was going to escape over head, I quickly grabbed its tail and slapped it to the lakeside.

They should have enough anti-air training already, so I quickly approach, and cut the wyvern's neck with [Magick Sword].

The magick swords looks just like the shield and protection magic from nature magic, transparent like glasses. I can freely change the blade from the size of a dagger to a two-meters long great sword. It can become extremely sharp, but in exchange it will become thin and brittle, so it's hard to use it without sword skill.

Since I was troubled during the whales extermination back then, I've improved the latter magick sword version that I've ordered to be able to produce 20 meters long blade. Since the blade's strength and the likes are impossible, I don't know just how practical it is.

Arisa and Lulu have leveled up from this battle. Lulu doesn't seem like she's gained new skills. I've let her read magic books recently, but I wonder if her training isn't enough. It's unfortunate.

"It's just one point, just one point more~~~"

I ask Arisa who's stamping the ground what happens, seems like she's short of one point to raise the space magic skill level.

◇

The grilled wyvern is too bitter, so it's lacking, but the kabayaki from the horn snake is superb. It might be nice if I served it on rice boxes like Arisa had requested. I've made tofu hamburg steak for Mia's dinner. With faces full of conflicts, Pochi and Tama compare Mia's hamburg steak with the kabayaki, but they lose to the charm of meat and eat the kabayaki and the

grilled wyvern in frustration somewhat.
Since the wyvern's innards contain poison, I buried them in a hole.

And then, we wash our sweat on the open air bath I've made on the lake shore after dinner.
Open air bath under the sky that's full of stars is nice after all.

Arisa who has just got out of the bath, Pochi and Tama are gathered, they drink the fruit milks that have been cooled with ice. I don't think it's good for a girl to drink it in one gulp while putting her hand on her waist, but I leave her alone, since she's properly wrapping the bath towel on her body.

"Fuuh, after some delicious meal, taking an open air bath on the lake side along with the reflection of the starry sky! On top of that, there's even the cold fruit milk, the rest has been decided, right!"

Arisa turns her head to me who's drying Mia's hair.
Please stop that guhehe laugh. I feel the danger to my body. I'll gladly welcome it after 10 years though.

"Hoi, Mia. It's over."
"Nn."

I think it's faster if I just use [Dry] of the life magic, but since Mia shows dislike while shaking her head, I still use a towel even now.

Arisa, whose mood has worsen since ignored, leans her body on my back while rambling like a drunkard, so I lift and throw her to the bed.

I plan to take the airship on the mountain range course that's away from the mass of wyverns on the summit of a mountain. I intend to take a look at it once, since I'm worried with the air current near the summit.

If anything unreasonable happens to the airship, I will fold the blimp and use [Magic Hand] to carry the airship.

While thinking about Bornean forest on the other side of the mountain range, I set off from the campground alone.

9-10. Mountain Range Encounter

Satou's here. They say that negligence is one's greatest enemy, but I think it's fine when you're at least aware that you're being careless. Recently, I've begun to think that the real scary thing may be self-conceit.

◇

The next morning, I have a reason for going ahead alone.

There's the fact that I want to look at how the wyverns react toward the air current, but I'm confirming things ahead since halfway of this mountain range is a different territory. I think it's most likely Bornean forest territory, so for the sake of my companions' safety, I should properly confirm it.

Actually I went out last night, but the air current was different, and the monsters weren't moving at night, so I went back because it was meaningless. Going back straight was embarrassing, so I cull out the stronger monsters around the perimeter of the camping ground. There were two horn snakes among the monsters I swept, I'll make another kabayaki next time.

Now then, the highest peak of this mountain range is about as high as the Everest from my original world. Wow, many 8000 meters tall mountains are lined up. Even the valley where I'm going isn't less than 4000 meters high, so it can be called a nature's stronghold.

The wyverns are most numerous on the southwestern 6000-meters tall mountain. Several dozens of them are there.

There is no wyvern on the mountain-crossing course that I've chosen, but the fan-shaped form that can be seen scattered away from the summit of the mountain along the course catches my attention. I wonder if there's something in the summit that attacks those wyverns like the wyvern from yesterday. The enemy search on the map works only in the mountain range,

so if there's really something, it's probably beyond that.

Now then, enough about the wyverns, there are several hidden villages scattered about on this mountain. Any one of them is a small village of 10-20 people. There are various races like humans, fairykin, bearmen, and such, but since they're separated quite far from each other, they don't seem to have cultural exchange or competitions.

I didn't intend to get in touch with any of the hidden village, but I saw a girl-san who was being chased by a pack of wolves, so since I didn't want to abandon her, I routed the wolves with [Remote Stun]. My figure was seen, but since I was in silver masked hero mode, it was alright.

◇

I choose a route where I won't be in a near-miss situation with the hidden villages, flying about 100 meters high above the ground along the mountain. Due to that, wyverns and flying beetle monsters attacks me in droves. Thinking that they would be heralds for the airship tomorrow, I cut them with [Magick Swords] whenever I encounter them.
I use [Remote Arrow] only for the monsters called land urchins that shoot out lance-like needles from the ground. I feel like I'd suffer pointed-tip phobia if I fought such hedgehog-like monsters up-close.

However, there sure are a lot of monsters.

There are only a few of them around the outskirts of the hidden villages, but if these many monsters attack the villages on whim, it looks like they'll be annihilated. Let's take care as not to use magic that are too noisy or showy.

I set up the [Magick Sword] against the wyvern that's come out of the mountain recess while feeling a bit fed up with it, but the wyvern doesn't seem to have me in mind.

'Perhaps', I think so while checking the map, and I understand the being that's chasing the wyvern.

I see, no wonder it's running.

While smashing the summit that the wyvern is detouring, that being appears.

A dragon.

Black dragon.

The jet black dragon calmly flies, and then, after it glares at me while flying in the sky, it catches the flying wyvern with one bite from its jaws.
It's a large dragon that's about 100 meters long from the tip of the horn on its head to its tail. However, it's slenderer than the [Bulking and Heavy Western Dragon] in my imagination.

So they haven't become extinct huh. I immerse myself with selfish relief.

Now then, what should we do about this.

The black dragon has been really glaring at me since a while ago.

『GROOOUUUUNN！』

>[Dragon Language Skill Acquired]

For the time being, I guess I should talk. I raise the skill to level 5 and activate it.

"Little one, prostrate yourself. You're before the king of sky."
"Heya, nice to meet you, black dragon-san."

I wonder if I should have added honorific title? Black dragon-san sounds like a medicine's name, what's up with that. In preparation for if the other party is short-tempered, I adjust my position and put my back to face the mountains.

"Hou, you understand dragon language huh, little one."

In reality, it's hard to speak this language. If I didn't have ventriloquism

skill, I might not be able to speak the words even if I understood it.

"Well then, you disrespectful one. Let's fight."

Why become like that.
To start a battle even before introducing itself, there's a limit even for battle junkies.

When my mouth is hanging to begin negotiating with it, I successively put up [<<Flexible Shield>>], and [<<Flexible Armor>>] while the crisis perception is kicking in.

Jet black color fills the view, and the mountains suffers the blow together with roaring sound.

Even though I immediately moved using the Sky Drive and the Ground Shrink, two out of the eight flexible shields I had put up were gone.

Dragon Breath.

I see, this is indeed.
Two mountains have been hollowed with just one attack. It's good that I changed my position. It probably won't reach the base of the mountain where Arisa and the others are, but in case of the worst happening.

"Hou, you've evaded Black Flame (Breath) huh. As expected of a hero."
"Thanks. I don't want to fight if possible though?"
"This is inevitable. Dragons and heroes, it's a fate for them to fight if they meet."

Wait a minute. Didn't they fight alongside Yamato-san?
The question is lost along with my voice from the second Black Flame (Breath) roaring sound. This time I'm a bit late from escaping, but it seems that I can defend against one blow of it if I use all eight of [<<Flexible Shield>>].

The black dragon has caught up with me since I was inspecting that.
Its tail attacks me from a blind spot.

It's several times heavier than Wagahai-kun's, but lighter compared to an attack from the wild boar king.
In other words, it's not a strength that I can't endure huh.

This time I counterattack the black dragon that has lost its momentum and stopped in the air. By combining Sky Drive and Ground Shrink, I strike the heart of the black dragon with fighting game characters-like kicks.
Many scales are broken the moment a kick connects, but the kicks doesn't pierce through it. That was dangerous, I mustn't forgot that I should not kill it.

However, there were responses like glasses breaking before the scales were broken. There probably are magical defense fields on surface of the scales.

The black dragon, that has become quiet after I fling it to one of the mountain, pushes aside some debris and gets up.
It howls once on that spot--looks like it uses magic.

I'm shot with black lightning.

>[Lightning Magic: Dragon Skill Acquired]
>[Darkness Magic: Dragon Skill Acquired]
>[Darkness Resistance Skill Acquired]

This is the first time I've acquired two skills from one magic.
It's quite strong, maybe because it's a compound elemental magic. It sips through even the gaps of the dense flexible armor formation, and burn the leather armor inside. The flexible armor still has 80% of its endurance, but the leather armor has been torn.

I feel tingling for a bit, but there doesn't seem to be any strange additional effect.

Now then, what should I do.
It looks like it'll die if I shoot it with an intermediate-level magic, and using holy swords will turn it to pieces.

Of course it doesn't seem like the black dragon is open to discussions.
Can't be helped, let's talk with body language.

I drop the black dragon that's trying to fly to the ground with [Air Hamer]. I've already expected the 150-meters radius crater that it produces. Since the dragon suffers even less damage than I've expected, I randomly pound it not directly, but with [Air Hammer], and [Short Stun] while 'oraoraora'-ing, breaking the black dragon's spirit.

While taking notes of the black dragon's health, I repeat the environmental destructions.
I guard against the Black Flame (Breath) that it's thrown out of desperation with [Aqua Wall]. Apparently, the Black Flame (Breath)'s strength is in proportion with the black dragon's stamina, it doesn't have the trace of power like it's shown in the beginning. [<<Water Film>>] might even be able to guard against it unexpectedly.

Nevertheless, the black dragon's attack isn't stopping even though it's been cornered this much. Just how much of a battle junkie this dragon is. It's used not only the [Lighting], and [Darkness] magic from before, but even the [Fire], and [Wind] magic, yet everything is blocked by the flexible armor, there's no meaning to it.

"Guhahaha, this is fun hero. It's been since my fight with the heavenly dragons that I use this much power to the limit."

This dragon must have certainly troubled the heavenly dragons.
Is it intentional, or unconscious, this conversation is probably for the sake of getting my guard down. Scraping sounds are mixed in the conversation as the dragon seemingly casts magic, jet black feelers that look like shadow whips arise from the shadow of the mountain in the surrounding below me at once. They're not only appearing from below, but also the surrounding shadow, wrapping me.

According to the log, it's a magic called [Dark Snap]. The darkness version of shadow whips huh.

By tying me, is it going to use Black Flame (Breath), or a secret advanced-level magic, or maybe a forbidden magic like the hero's companions was using.

--at this time, I was careless.

The next black dragon's attack is not magic.

It's fangs.

One bite of the primitive fang.

It's said in the picture book that I read for Pochi and the others.

The fangs of dragons penetrate through everything.

The fangs of dragons destroy even the demon lord, it's the ultimate blade.

The black dragon fang penetrates my flexible shield, and tears through my flexible armor.

And then, fresh blood overflow—

9-11. Mountain Range Encounter (2)

Satou's here. Newcomer's welcome party, year-end party, and new year's party. There are various types of feasts, but I feel that they're lubricant for communications. Drunkards who don't know their own drinking tolerances are troubling though.

◇

"Whoa!"

Just before the fang thrusts into my shoulders, I drive my fist onto it without holding back. The broken fang injures the black dragon's mouth and blood overflow from it. Well, it should be healed immediately since it's a dragon. Probably.
I twist my body using that momentum, and hit the side of the black dragon's head with a roundhouse kick.

However, carelessness really is one's greatest enemy. I didn't think that the flexible shield and the flexible armor could be smashed that easily. I was thinking of countering it when the fang was to be stopped by the flexible shield, but since it was easily drilled through, I lost my composure.

I look at the black dragon who has fainted right beside me.
Did I kick it a bit too hard? I think that there was feeling of the skull cracking, but a dragon will probably be cured immediately. They're the strongest creatures after all.

However, after waiting for nearly one hour, and even after the [Fainted] status has disappeared, the black dragon isn't waking up.

Is it playing dead?

Come to think of it, the dragons that are depicted on the picture books all like to drink. There are a lot of dragons that are heavy drinkers too in my

world, I guess I should try it. If it's a non-drinker dragon, we can just fight once again. I won't let my guard down this time.

I put a barrel of liquor near the tip of the black dragon's nose. It's a strong liquor even among the breweries at duchy capital called [Dragon Slayer]. The strong drink here (this world) is different even though the alcohol strength matches, this one is famous to be severe from the first taste.

I use the broken fang to break the liquor barrel's lid, rich liquor odor spread to the surrounding. The black dragon's nasal cavity has expanded before I knew it.
The black dragon peeks, but it quickly closes its eyes in panic when it meets mine.

Err, you're too late.

"You've awoken right? Why don't we exchange cups of liquor in praises of our good fight?"
"Uuumuuu, very well, I'll make an exception for this special draw. However, this amount isn't enough for exchanging cups."

While keeping up begrudging attitude, the black dragon gets up. I understand that you're trying to keep your dignity, but it's a fail if you stare at the liquor barrel so fixatedly like that.
I'm being tactful here, and urge the dragon to go ahead and then, it begins to taste the liquor. It's surprisingly obedient.

"Umumwu, excellent. Liquor that humans made really are tasty. But, dragon liquor won't lose to it y'know? I'm returning the cup, now taste the dragon liquor--"

The black dragon howls for very long like it's singing. It is a fantastical magic that summons a spring which gushes out liquor called [Liquor Spring (Soul Well)].

Since it doesn't feel right with just drinking, I add a roasted whole wyvern, and 200 kilograms of grilled whale meat on skewers as appetizers to accompany the drink. I use the whale's small bones for the skewers. For heating, I use furnace flame (Forge).

During the feast, when I was cooking the food, I contacted Arisa with [Telephone] magic. Since there were howls and sounds of destructions like it was some kind of kaijuu great battle at the mountain where I was heading, this was to put them to ease. Arisa and Liza seems to have been worried although not to the degree like before.

And, I've told Arisa and the others that I will be back after I clean up the mess, but--

"Umu, good, good, nectar indeed."
"The liquor from this spring is also delicious. How should I say, it really goes well with meat."

--This has become a simple drinking party.
We exchange cups while I'm listening to the black dragon's stories that are mainly about its battle journey.

I'm most relieved to hear about the dragons among the stories of the black dragon.

There were only 70% of the whole dragons in the dragon valley, while the remaining 30% are located in other continents. I'm glad that they're not on the verge of extinction or something.

The dragons on this continent--except the ones that were on the dragon valley--are the black dragon in front of me, the heavenly dragons that reside on the sacred mountain to the west, and several young dragons, beside those, there are only lower dragons.

Lower dragons are more or less dragons, but they don't have clear intellect, and are no different than beasts. According to the black dragon, likening lower dragons to dragons is like lumping goats and humans together because they are both mammals. Using goats in analogies seem to be the black dragon's favorite. I wonder if he really likes goat meat, it often comes out in his stories. Unfortunately, I don't have goat meat left in the storage, so I can't treat him with it.

While feeling relieved, I put another cup of the transparent green liquor

from the spring on my lips. Drinking ginjoushu-like liquor in the depth of a forest, it's a mysterious flavor.
<TLN: A grade of sake, google it if you're curious. :>

I've only noticed that we have fought for half a day when I look at the watch after the battle is over. The black dragon's stamina is amazing. It doesn't look like a level 68 at all. In fact, I feel that he's stronger than the level 69 hero.

I'm hungrier than usual, maybe due to having a fight that lasted half a day. I must have eaten about 10 kilograms of meat already although it might look little compared to the gag-manga like scene of the black dragon gulping down meat in front of me. I have to end this soon.

In spite of that thought, I keep on consuming the appetizers one after another as the feast continues until morning. I've stopped counting after eating 30 kilogram of meat. I feel slightly worried as to where the things I've eaten are gone to while staring at my flat stomach, but that worry vanishes by the slight drunkenness.

I'll bring the dwarves along to drink together next time.

>Title [Friend of the Black Dragon] Acquired
>Title [Mountain Crusher] Acquired
>Title [Hearty Eater] Acquired
>Title [Glutton] Acquired

◇

In the dawn of the next morning, I'm crossing the mountain range on the back of the black dragon.

I want to ride on a dragon just once.

Coming out of the sea of clouds, I overlook the dwelling of the black dragon on the highest peak, and we pass the mountain range. The morning sun shines on the [Sea of Trees]. It's a forest that continues on to the horizon.

And then, at the center of the forest faraway, there's the thread that extends to the sky which I can always see ever since we've entered the duchy territory. Mia has told me the true nature of that thread.

The world tree.

However, it doesn't look like one no matter how I look at it.
If anything, it looks like nothing but an orbital elevator. Was this not a fantasy world but an SF?

"What's wrong, my kindred-spirit, Kuro. Do you find the world tree unusual?"
<TLN: Kuro can mean black.>

The Kuro that the black dragon refers to is me.

This is something that happened during the drinking bout, by the black dragon's request, I gave him a name, Heiron. He had intended to ask for a name when someone that could equal him appeared. Looks like dragons don't have habit to give inherent name among them.

Maybe because I was nanashi (nameless), I've also acquired the name Kuro from the black dragon Heiron. About this Kuro name.

From what I was told, it was the name of a child that the black dragon raised on whim 900 years ago. Since this name is pronounced with definite Japanese language, that child might have been a reincarnated person. It seems he doesn't remember the child's race nor hair color. Even the name Kuro seemed to have resurfaced like a flash from the corner of his memory.

Going back to the main subject (leaving that aside), it's about the world tree right now.

"Yeah, I'm thinking just how far it's extending."
"That continues on to the void. I don't know how many days it'll take even with my wings."

Is that so, dragons can fly to the space huh.

It must not have anything to do with aerodynamic.

Since I'm outside the duchy territory, I use the [All Map Exploration] after a long time.
The forest before my eyes is really [Bornean Forest]. However, although it's certainly written that the forest is on the neighborhood of the duchy in the traveler's journal, I wish the distance was also written. It's no wonder that the person who's written the traveler's journal doesn't have a description for Bornean Forest.

The place where the world tree is located is in another map, yet the area of these sea of trees are a little wider than the duchy territory. Merely thousands of elves live in such vast area. And then, about 10.000 fairykins beside the elves are living in small villages scattered on the edges of the sea of trees.

"I'd like to take you to the world tree, but the high elf hag will be noisy then. When I got close to it back in the day, thunder cloud descended upon me, and half of my top scales were torn. I was in pain for 100 years until it was time for shedding. Therefore Kuro, you too should only get close around here."

I see, so the defense mechanism of the elves can repel dragons huh, amazing.
I should contact Mia's parents with [Telephone] and have them come pick us up after we've crossed the mountains.
I sure want to meet a high elf once.

◇

I parted with the black dragon Heiron at the place where we were fighting yesterday.

He didn't need the fang that was broken yesterday since it would grow back in 100 years, so I received it. He doesn't need to put dentures in huh.
Since there are broken pieces of dragon scales when I search around the area of the fight, I collect them all. Although the [Liquor Spring] will

seemingly turn into normal water spring after a few days, it's still gushing out liquor now, so I fill the barrels I have in hands with it. I'll send some to elder Dohar and Galhar when we get back to civilization.

I have to clean up one thing first before I get back to Arisa and the others.

Due to the utter rampages of the black dragon Heiron yesterday, monsters and beasts are making great migrations. Due to that, the village of the girl that I've saved from the wolves yesterday is in trouble.

I immediately rush to the sky above the village using Sky Drive.

Bizarre ants are besieging the dwellings that also acts as forts with the acid that can penetrate through the wall of rocks. They're just level 3 monsters, but there are a lot of them. If this keeps up, the village will be overrun in less than a few hours.

They're shouting something, but I don't understand the words.

>[Silga Language Skill Acquired]

I decide to quickly exterminate the ants with [Remote Arrows] since casualties will arise if I do it while being carefree. I finished them all after five volleys.

I put one point to Silga language skill along the way. Although I'm hearing it in prattle, they seem to be shouting something like angel, or Garleon-sama toward me.
I might be treated like an angel or god because I was shooting magic while floating in the sky. The bizarre ants acid attack was stinky so I didn't lower my altitude much.

This is only a village with 19 people, so it's probably going to be tough cleaning up the bodies of all these ants. While moving like gliding using sky drive, I put them into the [Bizarre Ants] folder in my storage. If I find an area where slimes are growing en masse, let's throw these there.

The village people who have come out are prostrating themselves on the ground.

Thin fumes are coming out of the hands and feet of the prostrating people due to the leftover acid on the ground.

"Face, raise, stand."

The words for conversing are troublesome. I raise skill level to three, enough for everyday conversations.
I heal them with [Aqua Heal] since they're a bit scalded. The elderly are saying, "The pain on my knee has disappeared", and the women "My scars disappeared". However, the voices that say, "My eyes, I can see with my eyes", or "Lila is standing", mixed among it, catch my attention. It's not supposed to be able to heal loss of body parts though?

I'm using [Pure Water] to remove the acid from the water well and the ground while being treated like a god. I don't know how effective it is, but this was the only magic that seemed usable.

The fields have become tragic after getting trampled by the ants, so I leave them with rice and smoked wolf meat as food for the the meantime. I'll leave the recovery of the fields for themselves to take care on their own.
I feel a bit meddlesome, but I also leave them with 10 bottles of diluted potion, and large quantity of medicines for avoiding monsters that have no purpose with me.

"Farewell! Live in good health."

With skill level three, the vocabulary is strange huh.

"God, please your name! Please tell us your name."

Who's a god.
The girl whom I had saved from the wolves before asked for my name. I'm undecided between Nanashi and Kuro, but I guess Nanashi will do. Let's use Kuro exclusively for when I meet some dragon.
I told the girl, "Nanashi", and left that village.

Since there were three villages that looked like they'd be in trouble, I made walls on the surface of the mountain to change the courses of the monsters and the beasts, avoiding the crisis before it happened. I pray that there

won't be any monster who climbs over the wall when it sees it.

>Title [Savior] Acquired
>Title [One who is Worshiped] Acquired

I wonder if it's because of the hardships, the airship ark that we are riding crosses the mountain range without any problem and finally arrive at the border of the Bornean Forest.

9-12. Bornean Forest

Satou's here. You can discern those who like to ride amusement park's vehicles and those who don't from their screams. Different people have different suitabilities of course, but perhaps they can enjoy it because they trust those game machines.

◇

After we've crossed the mountain range, the airship ark descends on a narrow grassland between the forest and the foot of a mountain.

"Ah~, it's finally the ground."
"Oh Arisa, wasn't it just half a day long."
"But, I hadn't thought that it would be shaking that much."

What Arisa's saying is true.
There were more strange air currents than I thought, so the shaking was worse than I expected. Thanks to [Canopy] magic, we didn't experience the effect of temperature fall and atmospheric pressure change, but since the [Air Control] couldn't absorb the radical change of the air current, I couldn't prevent the shaking.

"E, earth nanodesu."
"Yes, it's the mother earth."

As the result, Pochi and Liza look a bit pitiful.
They fall down to the ground with a plop. The eyes of the two are a bit unfocused. I didn't shake the ark this time though. Rather, it might've been better if I supported it to prevent the shaking.

Maybe I should had let them sleep like the horses that I gave sleeping medicines.
Arisa and Mia seem like they had motion sickness, they looked a bit unsteady. I gave them some anti-motion sickness medicine, but it didn't

seem to work well.

Nana is operating like usual. Even now, she's poking on a little flower below that's swaying from wind.

Tama seemed like she was really enjoying the unexpected shaking, she was frolic from the beginning to the end that now she's like a child who has just gone to an amusement park, drained of her battery. She's currently sleeping on the grassland with a satisfied smile.

Lulu was afraid and looked like she would get motion sickness, but she screamed, "Kyaa kyaa" as I caught her on my arm like she was riding a jet coaster, she was smiling until the end. I didn't have any objection since her flushed cheeks was cute.

There's still a long time until the nightfall, but since everyone is totally exhausted, I decide to camp here today.

There's no monster in Bornean forest, but there are some on the boundary here. However, there's no particularly strong monster around, so I leave Nana to guard everyone.

I've found the mithril vein I've always yearned for in the mountain range, so I'm going there to mine it. Since the mitrhil vein is quite deep at one kilometer below the ground, I make a shaft until the depth of my goal after using 4-5 [Mud Wall]. I don't know how much will the mithril decrease after refining it, but several tons of it are probably enough. If it's not, I can just come back here.

It's still a while before it's time to prepare for dinner, so I fly around the mountains, gathering things like clays for making earthenwares, stones for building, and rare earth minerals. There are also gold and silver veins, but there are too little gold per square meter area, so I won't touch it. I can just melt old gold coins if I need some.

◇

There's an unexpected guest when I've returned to the camp ground as the sun begins setting.
Even if I said guest, it's not a person. It's an unicorn living in Bornean forest. Unlike the unicorns in Muno forest, it looks like a zebra with its stripes instead of a white horse.

The unicorn and the hornless are getting along well as they eat the horse fodders I've made myself.

"This is?"
"Mutual love."
"Two hours ago, it came wandering about and they began to flirt. Riajuu, or rather RiaJUU, die."
<TLN: The JUU above mean beasts.>
"I won't subjugate or capture it since it's not hostile, but what should we do with it?"

Arisa curses them dejectedly, but please don't pick a quarrel with even unicorns. After telling Liza that she doesn't need to subjugate it, I begin to prepare for dinner together with Lulu.

Tonight I'm making tofu hamburg steak as the main menu per Mia's request. I also make chicken-less chicken rice, potatoes, and custard puddings. I was going to make fried prawns and sausages, but I made fried bamboo shots, and macaronis instead. Finally, I stab the shaped chicken rice with toothpicks adorned with flags, and it's complete.

"You're really diligent~ after characters bento, now it's kid lunches eh."
"Cute."
"Peerless and wonderful~"
"Yes nanodesu! If just hamburg is the strongest, it'll be peerless with this many additions nanodesu!

Pochi has recovered enough to make you think her exhaustion a few hours ago is an illusion. Her tail isn't enough to show it as she's even swinging her arms. I'm glad that she's excited, but she could faint if she's too excited.

"Master."
"What is it?"

Nana is looking at me with eyes that look very dissatisfied. Since Nana seems like she would go on a rampage, I've restrained her with [Magic Hand] ahead of time. It's unfortunate that there's no tactile sensation.

I've made everyone's shares properly this time. Nana also has one of course. I've especially added all three kinds of the flags for Nana's plate. She probably won't rampage now.

"Keen insight. Praising master for having made something truly wondrous."

I'm glad that Nana is also satisfied. Arisa grumbles, "I'm not a kid.", but it seems it's just spoken words.

Since I feel sorry for them if there's no meat, I pile up wyvern karage on another plate. I use wyvern meat that I've pickled with liquor soup since yesterday. I hear Liza is saying, "It's even more delicious than yesterday.", so I'll use seasoning for wyvern meat from now on.

With this kind of menu, it's easy to tell their habits of eating food; Tama starts from her favorite ones, while Pochi and Mia start from their least favorites. Although the food on the large platter are Pochi's favorite too, so she's eating it.

"Satou, delicious."
"Nn."

I reply Mia who's unusually speaking using two words by mimicking her. To Mia who firmly demands another helping, I serve it. Pochi and Tama who have finished eating earlier after battling for karage with Liza present their plates while saying, "Another~", "Another nanodesu." when they see that scene.

When the big pot that I've prepared with chicken rice becomes empty, everyone is full as they sprawl on the sheet for sleeping while patting their stomaches.

I leave the cleaning up to Liza and Nana as I begin to make a simple electric fan.

Even though we're beyond the mountain range, we shouldn't be located that far to the south, so we've become a bit sweaty, I'm making the fan to make our sleep more pleasant. By the time I realized that I could just use [Air Control] to create some breeze, I had completed the electric fan.

◇

The next day after breakfast, I asked Mia the way to enter Bornean forest, but since she had never gone out of the forest, she didn't know.

Then, I guess I should ask someone who knows.

I search Mia's parents, Lamisauuya, and Lilinatoa from the menu and mark them. Now then, I guess the one I should contact is the mother.

I invoke [Telephone] magic with Lilinatoa as the target. This magic won't be properly invoked if the other party doesn't want to talk. It's good that it can't be used to attack with prank calls.

"Who?"

The reply is a voice that sounds exactly like Mia's. Only I can hear this voice. It's certain since I've tested it with Lulu and Pochi before.

"Pleased to meet you, I'm Satou, a human. I'm sorry for calling you with magic--"

Right at then, Lilinatoa-san's voice cuts in.

"My! Satou-san you said?! Are you the one Dohar's mentioned? That's right isn't it! Then, perhaps you've brought Mia along? You've brought her right? --"

She's talking like a machine gun, just like Mia is when she's drunk.
I'm made to listen to her for five minutes straight without any chance to talk back. Looks like they know my name from Dohar-san's message. I'm glad the words that Mia's said in the dwarven hometown like "Mutual love", or

"Eloping", aren't taken seriously by them.

In contrast, the letter from Seryuu city's manager-san, Yusalatoya, hasn't arrived yet. It seems Dohar-san employed magic transmission which made his message arrived first.

They're going to pick us, but they don't know our position, so I shoot a fireball to the sky as a signal.

A little while after the fireball has disappeared, two elves appear from the forest that has been divided in front of us.
They're wearing green clothes like the elves in the picture books.

""Mia""
"Laya, Lia"

Parents and child who call each other with their names are hugging.
Really, this is quite a moving scene.

Arisa is pulling the sleeves of me who's being moved as I watch the reunion.
What? Even though it's at the good part?

"Hey, they're Mia's parents right?"
"That's right."
"But you know~"

I understand what Arisa is trying to say.
Mia's parents look like they're only slightly older than Mia, they look younger even compared to Lulu. They seem to be a race who grow slowly, Hayato will be delighted.
The father's face looks exactly like the elf manager-san at Seryuu city. They might be blood-related, their population is few after all.

"Satou."
"Thank you."
"My, Satou-san right? You're Satou-san aren't you. You're younger than I thought? You're young aren't you--"

I greet the parents whom Mia introduces.

Nevertheless, the father seems like a taciturn person like Mia. There's no middle way between this couple, it's really hard to talk with them.

We're going to enter the Elves' hometown as we're invited by Mia's parent.

9-13. Bornean Forest (2)

Satou's here. In anime and manga, I've seen a lot of scenes where the character mistakes the mother for the child, but I've never encountered it in reality. You can't deceive the wrinkles and the skin gloss after all.
However, in a different world with long life species, it seems to be a relatively common scene.

◇

"■■　■……■　■　■　■■■■■ Forest Maiden Summon (Summon Dryad)"

Mia father sure is fluent when he's chanting.
His summon calls out a little girl with bare skin and long green hair that appears from the trunk of a tree. She looks exactly like the dryad near the maze of Trazayuya. Since she's level 30, she's probably a different one.

However, the dryad talks to me candidly when our eyes meet.

"Boy! It's been awhile."
"Are you perhaps the dryad I've met on the withered mountain?"

If that's true, she's leveled up very fast.

"I guess you could say that, or not like that at all. This body's status will change depending on the tree used as the cost, but the inside is the same."

Is it something similar to how the running software is the same even though the PCs are different?

"Dryad."
"Wait a minute."

Mia's father calls the dryad, but she treats him irresponsibly, and gives priority to talking with me. Oh?　She can defy her summoner huh.

The dryad floats a bit above the ground, clings her arms on my neck, and presses her body. Your face is close. Close I said.
I push back the body of the dryad who's being overly close.

"That time was delicious. I want to taste it again."
"W, wait, are you cheating? You're cheating right!"
"M, master."
"Mwuu."

The dryad most likely deliberately leaves out the word, "Mana", and Arisa who's heard it approaches me while howling, "Ugaa."
Even though it's groundless, Lulu looks at me while looking very sad, and Mia who's hiding behind is scratching my back.

That dryad goes under my armpit as if peeking to see Mia's face.

"Oh~? Oh oh oh~? The one over there is baby-chan right?"
"You're mistaken."
"I'm not you know~? It's about time you pay the compensation I wonder~?"

The dryad chases Mia like a cat who has found the rat. Please stop running in circle around me you two. You'll soon become like melted butter y'know? Even Mia's parent begin to question her when they heard 'compensation' word from Dryad.

"Mia!"
"Wait, Mia! Don't tell me you asked something from dryad? You did didn't you? Even though I've warned you so much! I've warned you right? --"
"Mwuu, emergency."

While Mia's mother is having a long talk, Liza is supplementing, and it seems that Mia had borrowed the dryad's power for making a shortcut on the forest during the Muno city incident. Mia's mother tries to negotiate with the dryad, but it seem they're not reaching an agreement.
As it is now, the dryad will suck Mia's mana and life force, turning her dry. I don't want to see that.

"Dryad, is mana fine as the compensation?"

"Of course, it's alright~ I'm only going to drain the stamina since the mana isn't enough. If it's the boy's mana, I will gladly take it."
"I understand. Then you can absorb it."

When the dryad is coming for my lips, the voices of Mia's parents and Arisa stop her.

"Wait."
"That's right, wait Satou-san. Dryad is a glutton, she can eat no matter how much you know? She will absorb, sip sip. Do you want to become dried thing even though you're so young? You don't do you--"
"Gyaa, nonono! Those lips are mineee~~~"
"Mwuu."

My lips are mine.
Mia thrusts herself between the dryad and me. It looks like she's trying to protect me, but looking at her trembling body, she seems to fear the dryad's going to drain her.

I ask the dryad a question while slowly avoiding Mia's side.

"Dryad, can you absorb besides from the lips?"
"I can you know? You like the lewd one better?"

The instant Arisa hears dryad's "lewd", she's boiling. Since the talk didn't progress, I quickly blocked her mouth with my hand.

"Without the lewd one."
"Then, how about I drain it by kissing on above your heart?"

When I picture it, it looks like a crime, but it's alright if it's just that I guess. I take off the knight-style coat and my shirt. I feel that Arisa and Lulu are staring at me, but it's probably just my imagination. Why would they look now when I've always changed clothes beside them.

Since Mia's parents are worried, I tell them that I've transfered my mana to the dryad once before, putting them at ease.

"Then, thanks for the me~al."

Mia's parents are right to describe her as a [Glutton].
My mana are being drained at an amazing rate. Due to me having mana sensing now unlike before, I understand the flow of mana. Moreover, since I've grown accustomed with mana operation, I understand that the dryad is adjusting the flow of the flowing mana to eliminate the waste. In fact, I feel that the efficiency of the dryad's absorption has improved compared to when she started to drain.
It seems the mana that the dryad has drained go toward the forest, it's spreading through the roots of all kinds of trees.

However, just how much she's going to drain.
I feel that she'll really drain it all if I leave her alone, so I stop her when she's drained 1500MP in total.

"Aahn, more."
"Stuff it."

All the trees around the surrounding have become in full bloom. Depending on the type of the trees, there are also some which have its branches bending due to the fruits that have ripened. They shouldn't have been there just now. There are no overgrown weeds, I wonder if the dryad has controlled it.

"Well~ It's been awhile since I eat this much. Just say if you want some helps in the forest. I'll save you 2-3 times for free."
"Thanks for that."

I'd have liked her help with the weeds highway.

>Title [Guest of the Forest] Acquired
>Title [Lover of the Forest Maiden] Acquired

Who's the lover of whom.

◇

I leave Lulu to wipe my breast with a wet towel, though it's not like it's dirty. You don't have to rub it so strongly you know? Although I think so, I'm not saying anything since I'm overawed by Lulu's serious expression. Nana was going to imitate the dryad, but Arisa stopped her. That's rare, usually it's Arisa who would to try to imitate such thing.

Looks like Mia's and Mia's parent's surprised expressions have settled when I've finished wearing clothes.
I thought Pochi and Tama were quiet since a while ago, turned out they were being held on Liza's armpits while she put her hands on their mouths. Since they ask for help with their glances, I tell Liza to release them.

"The gate."
"Right, right, I've forgotten haven't I. It's only for a bit you know? You've called the dryad in order to create the road to Bornean hometown. Isn't it?"
"That's right."
"Understoo~d. Forest Lead (Alf Road)."

With Mia's father's urge, the dryad uses a magic.
A road has opened between the forest, countless firefly lights appear from the ground, and the space is dyed with the golden color from it.

It's quite beautiful.

"Now, go~ It won't open for long."
"Let's go."

We tread upon the golden road with the guidance of Mia's father.

>[Forest Magic Skill Acquired]

Looks like it's a road made in subspace as the map only shows, [Area without Map].

"You can't look back okay~ you would become a lost child."

Please don't say such thing from behind. Pochi and Tama catch my hands, looking uneasy. Forbidden from looking behind, it's like Orpheus' and Izanagi's road to hell huh.

Later, I learned that looking behind was no problem. However, you could stray off the path if you do, thus they warned so.

When we come out of the road, we are near the center of Bornean forest.

◇

"Fuhaaa, TRU-LY, a town where elf lives right!"

Usually I would have stopped Arisa's shrieks, but it's impossible this time.

Houses where people lives made in the interior of gigantic trees are spread in front of our eyes. There's a fountain made from blue crystal in geometrical shape at the center of the open space, and around that fountain, small palm-sized fairies, and pixies are flying.

Since Nana has begun to walk there unsteadily when she sees the pixies, I exchange looks with Liza and pin her together from both sides.

The tree houses are built around the water fountain as the center. One of the houses can be as big as a 20-story building. Passages made from ivies and leaves are hung between the tree houses, connecting them.

I can see a super gigantic tree veiled between clouds behind those houses.

That is the world tree.
The bottom of the tree is properly of trees and shrubs. I'm glad, it's not really something like an orbital elevator.

The elves who are appearing from the tree houses are calling Mia's name while waving their hands. Mia waves her hand back while she faithfully calls each of their names. The corners of her eyes have become slightly moist.

Welcome home, Mia.

9-14. Mia's Secret

Satou's here. During the times when food allergy was a minor problem, looking for things that can be eaten seemed to be hard. Even longer ago, there was also time where people that were very picky with their food were stopped being treated like humans.
I wonder if food allergy exist in the other world...

◇

"Sweet melons~?"
"Lots are growing nodesu!"
"Pochi, Tama. They're fruits the elves have raised, so you can't take them without permissions okay."

Those are on the trees around Mia's houses that create the spiral staircase we're currently climbing. Pochi and Tama are in high spirits when they see the sweet melons and crimson oranges grown along the way.

"Nn."

Mia plucks one of the fruit, cuts it into two with a knife, and gives them to Pochi and Tama.

"When you're hungry, you can pluck and eat them as you like you know? You don't need to be reserved--"

I see, rather than being raised by someone, it might be more like ginkgo trees on the roadside.

Or so I've thought, not only on the trees along the roadside, but fruits and flowers are growing even inside the houses. I think the sunlight don't reach to the inside, how are they growing them.

We're guided to a big living room with very tall ceiling.

We leave Mia behind who's being jostled, and head toward the room with a table that looks like a tree stump guided by Mia's parents.
When Mia's father says, "Chairs", ivies rise from the ground to become chairs. This is quite fantasy-like.

When Mia's father snaps his fingers, some pixies bring several goblets and line them up on the table.
Mia's father snaps his fingers once again, and this time pitcher plant-like plants descend from above which then pour transparent liquid with sweet smell into the goblets.

Is it fine to drink this?
But, Pochi and Tama drink them without hesitation and raise voices of praises. Is that so, it's tasty huh.

We were captivated with the fantasy scenes that was unfolding in front of our eyes that we neglected to monitor one dangerous person.

We notice that after we've heard small voices of protests.

"'Let go of me.'"
"'Hey you, let go.'"
"'Halp, Laya, halp.'"

When I turn around, there are three pixies who have been caught by Nana begging for Mia's father help with faces that are about to cry. Nana is holding two of them on both her hands, while the last one is outrageously crammed on her breasts. Change with me.

Mia's father keeps staring at the pixie who's struggling on Nana's cleavage, not helping them. Since my eyes meet with Mia's father's somehow, we nod.

Ow.
Arisa beats my head from behind. The pixies seem to have been rescued by Lulu.

"Good grief, you oppai planet people."
"That's a misunderstanding."
"Nn, misunderstanding."

I avert my face from the condemning looks of Arisa and Lulu, and instead, drift my view to Mia who's being jostled. Elves are all slender after all huh. It seems there's no chubby elf. Either partially, or wholly.

◇

"'Geez, ya' gone and done it now.'"
"'That was bothersome.'"
"'Here, cozy.'"

For some reason, the pixies who have ran away from Nana are nesting on my head and shoulders. The one who's said peeved remark is pulling my hair while saying that. Since it's painful in itself, I put them on the table with my hands.

Pochi splits some baked sweets and feed it to the complaining pixies.

"'Ou! This is some good stuff.'"
"'It's true.'"
"'More, give me.'"

The crumbs from the baked sweets are spilling, but I guess I can just use life magic later.
The pixies from the town have gathered due to the praising voices of the pixies here.

"'Hey, give me?'"
"'Won't you, give me too?'"
"Au, au, wait nanodesu, there's, there's no more nodesu."

The pixies are talking in elf language so their words shouldn't connect, but somehow the conversations are established.
It's fun to look at panicking Pochi, but let's send her a lifeboat.

I take out a basket full of baked sweets through Item Box onto the table.

The pixies attack the baked sweets in high spirits.

...Uwah.
They're too vigorous that there are those who bury themselves on the basket showing only their legs, and there are also some who are falling from the table on the opposite side while carrying the sweets.

The elves who are coming with Mia seem to be interested with the baked sweets too, I've already lined up two basket of sweets on the table.

"Yum." "Umu." "Good." "Delicious."

They generally talk in short speech like Mia, but there are also some who talk long, although not as bad as Mia's mother.

"My, it's delicious. Really delicious. Hey, hey, are these made by Satou-san? It's not, is it?"
"It's true, this is delicious."
"Hey, although it's different from honey, the sweetness is wonderful isn't it."

Most of the elves are friendly, but not all of them it seems.
One elf boy points at me while glaring in front of me.

"Mutual love?"

Who with whom?
Mia clings on my neck from behind, and show it to the boy. "Of course!", she said, but I think that's groundless.
I understand that he has problems from his expression, but please tell that to the person in question.

Apparently, that boy likes Mia. Although I've been referring him as a boy, he looks like Mia's father. He's also 250 years old, so he's quite older than Mia.

"What's good about him?"
"Beautiful."

Ha? Beautiful?

The reply for the boy's question is incomprehensible. In fact, the elves around us are looking puzzled too.

"'Beautifull.'" "'Yup, it's beautiful.'" "'Isn't it.'"

Some pixies are agreeing with Mia.
The eyes color of Mia's mother who's tilting her neck in puzzlement change from blue to silver and then she looks at me.

"My, oh Mia! It's certainly beautiful, I've never seen this before. I wonder how many spirits are there, it's hard to see since there are too many of them, but it's a beautiful light."
"It's true."
"You're well liked by the spirits."

The people who call me beautiful have the [Spirit Seer] skill in common.
Apparently, spirits are gathering around me. Looks like I'm letting out an aura called Spirit Light that the spirits like, and it looks beautiful.
They tell me that it's rare for spirits to gather besides on place where the earth vein is gushing out.

The reason why Mia can find me wherever I am seems to be this mass of spirits that act as a landmark.

◇

There was another secret of Mia that had become clear.

It's about meat.

"My, oh Mia! You won't become an adult if you're picky with food you know? Now, don't avoid it, eat the meat. You'll eat it right?"
"Mwuu, unnecessary."
"Eat."

Mia is sandwiched between her parents as they tell her to eat meat.
It was our misunderstanding that elves couldn't eat meat. In truth, other

elves eat meat dishes just fine.
They're not like Liza who regards meat as supreme, but among them, there's no one who only eats vegetables.

I understand from seeing Mia that elves are relatively hearty eaters, so I go with Lulu to help elf madams to prepare the meal. I let the madams to taste the whale karage and kabayaki from yesterday, and after I get the OK, the mass production begins.

There are some cookwares with quite bad taste like stoves with a person face design, but it seems they're basically some kinds of magic tools. All the cookwares here are organic-like.

The difference with humans magic tools are how they don't need to consume mana of the person using them. The stove lights up when I just breath on it, and the oven heats up when I just knock it. Water comes out of the fish mouth-shaped faucet when I just hold my hands before it.

I'll ask the elves about the mechanisms later.

I serve the mass produced whale karage, fried rice and skewers on the platter. Elves who have come to help, and simple Pinocchio-like living dolls carry the plates to the banquet hall.

While I soothe myself as I look at the competition between Liza who's guarding the [Mountain of Karaage] like an impregnable fortress against Pochi, Tama and the pixies, I go out to the terrace and gaze at the town scape. I listen to the song that the elves are playing while putting the cherry-like fruit that the pixies have given me in my mouth.

"Satou."
"What's wrong Mia. Is it fine for the guest of honor to leave her seat?"
"Nn."

Mia leads me by hand as we walk the town of the elves.
Everyone seem to have gone to the banquet, there are only living dolls, and carriages without the auto-motion horses around.
And then, the place where Mia leads me to is—

9-15. Secret of Boruenan

Satou's here. When I went to the Huis Ten Bosch in Sasebo, I was surprised with the overflowing exotic atmosphere of that theme park. I was slightly shocked when I happened to catch a sight of the women who had been wearing Holland national costumes in the daytime wearing t-shirts and jeans at the pub during the night.

◇

How far are we going?

"Just ahead."

While looking at the town scape that the elves have adapted naturally, I follow Mia from behind.

"Here."

Mia is beckoning from an open space that's encircled with multi-colored mushrooms. There are two layers of the circles.
The AR indicates that it's called [Fairy Ring].

"What is this?"
"Ring."

Is this a place for holding some kind of ceremony? Let's pray that it has nothing to do with something like marriage.

"Teleport (Relocate)."

With Mia's signal, the two mushrooms rings are flashing reciprocally. I don't know where we're teleporting to, but since it's Mia who's doing it, it shouldn't be anything bad.
As the rate of the blinking light rise, intense light burst out from the floor.

When the reciprocal blinking ends, the teleport begins.

The next moment, we're on top of a hill that overlook a town with systematically built bungalows.
When I look up, there's transparent canopy supported by what seem to be tree branches. The size is such that it covers the entire town.

It's underground huh?

"The true town."

Mia parts her hand, and goes toward a place slightly away that looks like a tram platform. There's <<Floating Boards>> of nature magic floating at that station-like place. The boards are transparent, but they have color so it's probably different than the one from nature magic.
A bit later after we arrive at the platform, a young man who's riding the board arrives. His appearance looks like a boy, but since he has beard that doesn't suit him, he should be a young man. M, my past trauma-- It's fine even if it doesn't suit him isn't it.

"Welcome back, Mia. You've already brought him haven't you? Heya, I'm Tsutoleiya. Please call me Tsuya. I had studied in humans country about 100 years ago."

That young man candidly speaks to me.
According to him, the place where we've been just now is something that's been built to look like a [Genuine] elf town play for visitors.

That said, the elves are not doing it out of ill-will, it's all for entertaining guests. I am told that the Saga hero from 400 years ago, who had grown tired of fighting and lived here for the rest of the hero's life, made it.

Since the young man's story is long, the sulking Mia pulls my sleeves, and so I promise the young man to meet again and leave that place.

Mia skillfully jumps over the place that looks like a platform. The board floats back to its former height after sinking a bit. I jump to the board beside her board as she's advised. The board receives series of number that seem to be house number she's announced, and it starts running. Even though I

don't say anything to the board I'm riding, it follows after her afterward.

Every house is about 200 tsubo wide with walls that look like they're made from white resin-like material, and slates roofs. The walls are overran with ivies though so I can see the color only slightly. The houses are divided not with fences, but with hedges and flower beds. If I have to say, the flower beds seem to be more dominant.
<TLN: Tsubo=
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_units_of_measurement#Area >

However, there's no one here.
I wonder if everyone is participating the banquet at the town above?

The boards we're riding at 20 Km/H flies through the town as if gliding. The road is asphalt, or rather it looks like tennis court's ground, or rather it's made from pebbles that look like small light brown beads put together.
I asked Mia about it, but since she didn't seem like she had interest with it, she replied, "Don't know". Let's ask that seemingly well-informed young man if I meet him again.

And then, we're stopping slowly in front of a house. The boards gently descend to the ground, and disappear into it as if sucked.

◇

The house where Mia leads me to looks more like a modern building than a fantasy one.
What makes me think that is quickly apparent.

It's the windows.

Windows in this world are relatively small, all of them are holes made from woods for the purpose of ventilations or lighting.

However, Mia's house before me are adorned with big glass windows and glass doors with high degree of transparency. Back at the duchy capital, there were some mansions that used oak glass for windows, but there were

none that used them as many as this, and most were fixed fittings. Since the ones here are fitted on windows frames that have rails, they probably can be slided for opening and closing like on modern constructions.

When Mia touch the front door, I can hear a sound like air escaping, and the automatic door opens. After I enter as leads by her, the automatic door closes behind. This is quite SF sthick. Might as well have multi-layered airlock doors, probably would have been more interesting.

The ceiling on the corridor is transparent, and the light of the sun from beyond the canopy shines here.
Yet, the light is gentle since it has penetrated two layers of glasses.

Mia leads me by hands as we walk through the corridor.
As expected, seems there's no magical structures on the corridor.

"Here."

It seems that this is Mia's room.
There are one bed and one desk. Dolls with the shape of penguin-like deformed birds are lined up in the fixed-fitting shelf beside the bed. The room is generally dyed in pink color. There's nothing like houseplants.

So she wanted to show me her room.
How do I say this, it looks like the room of a junior high school girl from modern time.

"Don't look."

Mia enters a clothing room that looks like a walk-in closet.
I won't peep even if you don't say it.

Since it's become quiet, I use [Telephone] magic to contact Arisa.

"Yesh, the common Arisa-chanspeaking~."
"Sorry, wrong number."

Since Arisa is clearly drunk judging from her words, I cancel the [Telephone] magic. This time I invoke [Telephone] toward Liza, but there's

no reply. Looks like she's sleeping. It connects to Mia's mother in the end, so I tell her that I'm visiting her house.

That day I accompanied Mia on her fashion show until late at night. Genuine elf native dress complete with green tricorne, one-piece-like clothes, and three-quarter length pants with short skirt, there were plenty more variations than I had thought.

I put Mia, who had become sleepy after she was tired, on the bed and let her sleep, and then I also slept together beside her.

As for my excuse, it was because I was tired from the confrontation with the black dragon, and the all-night drinking bout yesterday.

I fell deep in sleep like mud without even dreaming.

◇

"Guilty, or not guilty!"
"Guilty～"
"Guilty, nano desu!"
"Master, guilty desu."

Before my eyes who has woken up, there are Arisa who's lifting the corners of her eyes, Pochi and Tama who are happily diving to the bed, and Lulu who looks like she's about to cry. Nana and Liza are here too, but the two keep silence. No, Nana steps forward and put a hand toward Arisa.

"Arisa. The lower official me will advocate for master."

Oh, a defense lawyer has appeared.
No wait, I'm innocent in the first place.

"What, does Nana approve affair?"
"Arisa, listen well."
"Go on and say it."

Arisa edges back slightly from Nana who presses on calmly.
I wonder why, I can't help but feel that Nana will say some unnecessary things.

"Master and Mia are from different races. Descendants will not born even if they try to mate. Therefore, it is not affair."

Nana is making a proud expression that I haven't seen for awhile, but as expected, her advocacy is off-the-mark. And, didn't she imply that I've done the mistake with Mia?

"Mia!"

Uwa, Mia's father has come.

"Ara ara, you're getting along well."
"Nn, mutual love."

Like I said, there's no romance.
Mia's mother seems to have understood while enjoying the scene, but Mia's father is misunderstanding it.

Mia's father misunderstanding wasn't cleared until after Mia's mother assisted. No, rather than clearing the misunderstanding, I feel that it's left hanging after the machine gun talks of Mia's mother drowned it.

Mia's mother gets down to business after she has talked aplenty.
You should have cut in faster if you have business.

"Now then, Satou-san, we'd like to hear about what happen with Mia step by step, so would you be willing to meet with the elders council?"

I may be able to meet the rumored high elf.
Looking at the elves here, I can't expect dynamite body, but since normally I shouldn't have been able to meet them, I'm slightly looking forward to it.

9-16. High Elf

Satou's here. There's this phrase, 'clumsy beauty', but I think that's more favorable than a perfect beauty. Although, they only exist behind the TV or the net in my former world.

◇

The elder council hall that Mia's father has lead me to is located inside a block of the world tree, deep in the Boruenan forest.

We came over from the [Fairy Rings] on the underground town-like place at the surface town. I don't really know since Mia's father is too silent, but probably the block can only be entered via teleportation.

Of course, I had used [All Map Exploration] when I entered this block, but it couldn't map the layer above certain stratum, and the lowermost layer, maybe because they were in different blocks. Or maybe, there is some kind of system that can resist [All Map Exploration].

What I can gather from the known map is that this block is about five kilometers deep underground. I don't remember the thickness of earth's crust, but isn't this quite deep? The roots of world tree expands to the outside of the block structures, and even outside the edges of the whole Boruenan forest. The place with Mia's house yesterday is about 10 kilometers away from the this world tree block. I've mistakenly thought that it was quite close because the world tree is too bizarrely big.

Going back to the topic, there are a lot of elves in this world tree block. There are about ten times as many as the elves above. However, nearly everyone has [Sleeping] status. They're comparatively high leveled and older than the surface elves. Some of the younger elves are around one millennium old, but most of them are more than ten thousands years old. However, in contrast to their long life, there isn't any elf who is beyond level 50.

I'd like to hear just what kind of circumstances that the sleeping elves have, but I'm not asking Mia's father since he will likely retort back with, "How did you know?"

Now then, as for the long-awaited high elves, there are only eight of them. Moreover, seven of them are in [Sleeping] states like the other elves. The high elves are around level 50-70. Their longevities are wondrous even compared to the elves.

And, the only awake high elf is waiting in the elder council hall ahead.

I arrive at the destination while checking the world tree block like such. The boards that I've been riding disappears as it's sucked into the ground. The door in front of me is a three meters wide octagonal wood door. The corridors I'm coming from so far are all made of resin, it seems only the ones here are different.
The door opens like an automatic door when Mia's father takes a step forward. It opens by splitting to the left and right, and then there is another thin door immediately inside, that then opens by splitting to the top and bottom.
There's a 20 meters long passage inside with another door structure like just now at the end. It's like an air lock.

"Satou."

Oops, I've been thinking the structure of the automatic door too much.
I quickly go toward Mia's father who has entered the room earlier and is calling me.

◇

"Satou of Shiga kingdom. We wish to express our gratitudes for your assistance."
"Satou of Shiga kingdom. We won't forget the favor of saving the baby from the wicked magician."
"Satou of Shiga kingdom. We want to repay you for bringing back the baby

to us from the distant land."
"Satou of Shiga kingdom. You have--"

This here is an auditorium with an open space that looks like it can hold more than 1000 people inside.
There are around 20 dignitaries of the elder council who are sitting on the front row inside.

And one by one, they're saying thank you for having brought Mia back, but why are they using, "Satou of Shiga kingdom" at the beginning of the sentences. I wonder if that kind of phrase is a rule. They seem to know the fact that I understand elf language as they speak in elf language.

These elders look about as young as Mia's father.

However, their eyes are different.

How do I say this, their eyes look like aged turtles, calm, or rather stillness that are bordering on apathy. If you look closer, their eyes are steadily immobile as if they're about to doze off. As expected of people who have lived thousands of years. I'd like to get along with them and listen to their tales from ages past.

However, even though the black dragon Heiron is far older than these elder elves, I feel that he's much younger than them. I'm interested if this is due to the racial difference, or individual difference.

And then, as if waiting for when everyone has finished saying their thanks, the thick curtain on the interior of the room rises, and then people come out while riding on the only light board in the room.

The long-awaited high elf-san is on the center of that board, and four elves miko-san are standing on all four sides as if protecting the high elf.
These four miko-san aren't wearing western style miko outfits like Sera and the others in the duchy capital, but Japanese-styles clothes. And it's even the miko clothing with excessive ornaments that's usually used during Kagura dances. Miko has to wear white quilt silk garment with red hakama after all.

Unfortunately, I still can't see the high elf.

That's because bamboo blinds immediately float between the four standing miko elves-san. Yes, they're floating. There is no props, and the miko-san aren't holding them either. It's probably magic.

The light board that the high elf-san and the elves are riding passes through between the elders, and stops before me.

"""""Be silent~"""""

The scepters of miko-san rung matching to their voices.
No one was talking, but it would be boorish of me to retort that.

"""""Holy tree-sama will honorably speak."""""

The high elf-san is called holy tree huh. Since her real name is Aialize, I wonder if holy tree is her nickname or an abbreviation of her position. From the AR, her title is [Pure Maiden], and her occupation is [World Tree: Ground Administrator].

The bamboo blinds that are hiding her smoothly open, and the high elf shows up.

Another little girl huh.

The one beyond the bamboo blinds is a little girl who's even younger than Arisa of around 5-8 years old. Her face looks a bit like Mia, but with her silver hair and red eyes, she's a bit different than other elves who have green hair and green eyes. Out of curiosity, I tried verifying her age, but I couldn't. This is the first time I've seen age with hundreds of millions units. I felt dizzy when I was halfway counting the digits.

However, her appearance is that of a little girl huh.

"Satou of Shiga kingdom. You've done well escorting Misanalia back to Boruenan forest, noja."

Hmm?

"Wacchi? Wa, thank you very much, noja."

<TLN: 'Wacchi' is cutesy form of 'washi', which means 'I', used mostly by elderly.>

I wonder why I feel that her way of speaking isn't natural.
She was speaking fluently halfway through it, but her words clogged when she was about to call herself, and she ended up speaking in monotone.
When her word was fluent, her voice was calm and gentle, but when it was clogging, it became like some strange anime voice. It's like when a person who isn't a voice actress tries to mimic one.

The elders are steadfast like always even when they see such high elf. But, although I can't see the faces of the four miko-san since they're covering it, their shoulders are trembling.

"What's wrong, ka ya?"

The little girl tilts her head to one side.

I've noticed that illusions don't work on me ever since I saw through Pochi's human form at Muno city back then.

I can see the figure of a woman in her 20s who's sitting, overlapping the standing little girl. Blue eyes and light blond hair, thin lips and nose that isn't too high, even though it's not at Lulu's degree, she's a beautiful woman without a doubt. It's hard to make out her body due to her white silk garment and miko shirt (chihaya), but her breasts look to be about C cup. I don't know her height since she's sitting, but I'm guessing it's around mine.

Nice, truly nice!
You have to meet such beauty in the other world or else it's not enough after all. Ah, I'm glad that I visit Boruenan forest.

"What do you wish for--rewards, noja?"

The little illusion girl pridefully says so full of confidence, but the real girl has her face a bit red.
It seems she's not doing this farce out of her own will. I'm slightly charmed at her timid troubled expression.

"Then, Satou of Shiga kingdom. I shall grant you a kiss as your reward, noja."

Oops, I didn't listen to the beginning and the end of the talk.
I see an illusion of the little girl spreading her arm and pushing her lips that become like an octopus' forward. The real form of the beauty seems to be embarrassed as she's closed her eyes.

I would have immediately declined if it was a kiss from a little girl, but there's no way I refuse if it's from such beauty.

Mia is also readily willing to kiss, so it must be like how Western people treat it like a greeting.

I step forward as if gliding through the ground, spontaneously put my hands on the beauty's cheeks, and lightly kiss her. I actually want to kiss the lips, but she's still the representative of elf hometown, so I restrain myself. I've gotten used to the kiss on the forehead after I helped Mia, so I kiss the high elf on her forehead.

Since there's no reaction I drop my gaze, the high elf has fainted with red face that looks like a boiled octopus. She seemed to have been so stunned she fainted.

Perhaps, it was bad?

◇

"Lua, give me water please."

The beauty-san who's sleeping on a bed that's shining transparent light, the high elf Aialize-san rises while being half-asleep.

Lua-san who has been waiting for Aialize-san to wake up together with me gives her some water poured from the pitcher. The water cup looks like it's made of glass, but it feels like plastic, such mysterious material. The AR says that it's called Alua Goblet. Alua is probably the material's name.

"Uu, what Daisaku's said must be a mistake. He said that high elf appears as a silver haired girl who uses [Noja] end word."
"Aze-sama."

Lua-san is trying to tell her that I'm here, but since she's frantically talking to herself, she doesn't notice me at all.
Daisaku-san is the hero from 400 years ago who has created the town back I guess?

"I know already, you're telling me not to speak ill of the deceased right?"
"Aze-sama."

Aialize-san is pouting with inflated cheeks like Mia.
That's cute.

"Mou, isn't it alright just for a bit. He must be thinking that I'm a weird woman. Even though he's the benefactor who has saved Mia, I wonder if he thinks that elf hometown is the worst now."
"Aze-sama."

That can't be helped. It is weird after all.

"Even though I went to the surface town to tell Mia [Welcome back] yesterday, she wasn't there. That's right, that Arisa girl was also saying, [High elf has to be silver haired little girl, it's the basic.], or, [Master will definitely refuse if he's given a kiss from a little girl as a reward.], but it's totally different."
"Aze-sama."

I see, so Arisa took part in this too.

"Mou, this is why I can't let my guard down against Japanese people. They're treating people like toys since a long time ago."
"Aze-sama."

There should be several Japanese people from successive generations, but maybe she's only ever met people like Arisa? There should be normal one like me among them, what an unlucky person she is.

However, she knows that Arisa is a Japanese huh?　She probably notices it from the purple hair. I had put on a blond hair wig on Arisa.

"Mou, Lua, what is it."

Lua-san points her finger with a little gesture at me.
I thought that it would be a problem to let a man enter her room, but since Lua-san didn't mind, I followed along. I don't really understand the hierarchy of this elf hometown. I guess it's more like democracy than monarchy. Or rather, it should be more like a big family.

Aialize-san turns her head mechanically like an unoiled tin doll.

Our eyes meet.

Aialize-san becomes flustered while going, 'au au'.
She's a clumsy person, but let's send her a life boat here. Feel like she'd think bad of me like Arisa otherwise.

"I've heard from Lua-san that you've been in fever since morning. I'm sorry that you had to overdo it for my sake."
"That's right Aialize-sama. Your fever still hasn't subsided, so please get some rest without overworking yourself today."

I quickly make eyes contact to Lua-san.
She's quickly ridden on my made-up story, [Her odd behaviors were because of her high fever that made her hazy.]

After Aialize-san had calmed down, I made a promise with Lua-san to visit them again, and decided to go back. According to Lua-san, seems that they have something to talk about. I feel that it's something troublesome, but it's fine just hearing it right.

When I returned to Mia's house, I was somehow told to [Seiza].
The leak doesn't seem to come from Mia's father. Behind Arisa and Mia, three of the miko are eating baked sweets while laughing happily. I'll slip in some extremely spicy cookies next time.

9-17. Daily Life of the Elves

Satou's here. I have often failed in game developments by only being able to imitate the outward appearance (of other game) without actually understanding the structure. I think you have to understand the structure if you want to develop and put it into practical use.
However, there are also some rare people who jump over the understanding and create new ideas. That's what you call genius huh~

◇

"""HEY BOY, there's a visitor for ya"""

Suddenly, several masks hanging on the wall were talking at the same time. Tama seems to have been completely surprised as she puts down the gomoku stone, curls her body, and raises her tail. Pochi also almost fell from her chair, but she survived thanks to Liza who supported her from where she was sitting beside her.

These masks seem to be something like intercoms. It wasn't working yesterday, so there must be someone who activated them last night. It might be the mischievous leprechauns that Tama's talked about.
I thought that the masks hanging on the wall would project the visitor's figure like a monitor, but it seems there's no function like that.

When I stand up the masks stop talking.

"I'll go see the visitor."

Lulu goes downstairs in pitter-patter to meet the visitors.
We're currently staying in the tree house that we visited on the first day. We were invited to stay in Mia's house underground, but since I didn't want to intrude upon the reunion of parents and child, we stayed here instead.

It's already been five days since we arrive at the elves hometown.

There was no need for us to stay for long since we had finished the goal of escorting Mia back home, but since we were here already I wanted to tour the elves hometown, and they easily agreed to it when I asked. Rather, they reacted with, "What are you saying? Of course you will stay here for a while right?" Elves perceive time differently than humans more than I've thought, by [For a while] they seem to mean several years.

I've planned to stay for half a month at the longest, but I'm worried being rude if we leave too fast.

"Master, Nea-san has come bringing the dishes that she's talked yesterday."

Nea-san is a 500 years old mrs elf. Her hobby is cooking, and trying to bring back the dishes that the hero Daisaku's left behind seems to be her life work. As I'm told, the hero Daisaku couldn't cook so he only orally imparted the ambiances of the dishes. She said that she couldn't reproduce it well.

Today we're going to feast on Nea-style hamburg steaks.
"Grilled kneaded meat dish" is the only information she's learned from the words left behind by the hero.

Nea-san proudly lines up five dishes on the table.
Meatball like small balls, roasted meat pasta, noddles meat that are knitted in koban-size and grilled, something that looks like nothing but a lump of meat, and the last one looks like a hamburg steak from the outside, they're on the plates that are lined on the table.

"Beside this one, nothing look like a hamburg steak, but they're delicious without a doubt."
"Yup, that's true. Particularly this second type, the Nea-style pasta, and the third type, the knitted noddles, they're tasty."

They're not hamburg steak, but I've never seen such dishes on earth. I guess it's like the dishes in the shop of a creative chef.
The reason why the Nea-style hamburg steak isn't like the real one is because it's only made from meat. Since Nea-san said that it was, "100% beef", there seems to be some problem from what the hero Daisaku's conveyed.

It's easy for a hamburg steak to become dried out, if it's only composed of meat, but it seems she's done something about it after several hundreds years of trials and errors. How patient. If asked, it would seem that she had created many derivations. I'll ask her to teach me some next time.

After Arisa and me have sampled them, the hamburg steak critics, Pochi and Tama also eat them.

"Nyu~? The hamburg isn't right~"
"Hamburg is softer, and elastic, and like juwatt when you eat it nanodesu! You eat it like, munch, and then happiness nanodesu."

I take the fork away from Pochi's hands that are swinging around passionately in front of Nea-san. That's dangerous.

Liza is nodding every time she eats a mouthful. Since the corner of her eyes have slackened, it seems to suit her taste.
Nana also curiously puts some into her mouth. She quietly only comments, "Delicious", but it doesn't seem to be a compliment.

Right at then, Lulu carries in a grilled hamburg steak.
The hamburg steak is put on a plate like the one in a family restaurant--A heated black iron plate put on top of a wooden plate type. I made them by Arisa's request when we were staying at the duchy capital.

Nea-san enjoys the aroma while seemingly being filled with emotion, and confirms the hamburg steak as if she's searing it into her memory. She should eat it soon.

"Itadakimasu."

She cuts one small piece with a knife and a fork, and puts it into her mouth. Pochi and Tama are following that fork's movement while drooling. You two, haven't you just had breakfast two hours ago. I glance at Liza on the side, she's only slightly opening her mouth, there's no drool. Let's not talk about her gazes.

Er~rr, please don't cry while eating it.

Nea-san is eating while flooding tears. It might be inevitable since it's like a phantom dish from her point of view. Someone with skill like her should be able to reproduce it after she eats if once.

I carry Pochi and Tama under my arms and bring them to the kitchen to let Nea-san savors the taste calmly.
Let's make a Japanese-style hamburg steak, a stewed hamburg steak, and a tomato burger for the occasion. Of course I also haven't forgotten to make the shares for the hungry children.

◇

The visitors have increased when I return to the dining room.

"Wait Aze-sama, how long are you going to keep eating after saying that you'd only try a bite."
"But, it's delicious da mon."
"Da mon, not."

Lua-san, the miko, is scolding Aialize-san, the high elf, as she's eating beside Nea-san. This person really is like a child.

The afternoon on the day after our first meeting, Aialize-san came, led by Lua-san, to apologize for the prank. Since I honestly didn't mind about it at all, I accepted it frankly. I also apologized for Arisa.
It's fine and all with these two, but in fact, one of the elf elder actually also came as the representative to apologize the morning of that day. To be frank, I was troubled when he was apologizing so seriously, so I told him to not mind it in a light tone. By the way, he was the one who gave permission for me to tour the elf hometown.

"Welcome, Aialize-sama, Lua-san. Nea-san, please taste these hamburg steaks too."

After greeting the two, I present the dish to Nea-san.

I ask Liza and Lulu to help me bring the prepared dishes on the kitchen

here.
I offer Aialize-san and Lua-san the dishes for the occasion. The pixies who have always been hanging around the kitchen, and the elves with free times are also helping to carry the dishes while coming here, no problem since I've made extra.

These pixies can only speak elf language, so the elves and me were going to act as interpreters, but Lua-san tactfully settled it with the translation rings that she took out out of nowhere to solve the problem. What a fantasy-like equipment. Even though it's a rare thing that isn't even among the loot from dragon's valley, Lua-san lets everyone to borrow the rings indefinitely. Apparently, there was an elf who zealously made translations rings a long time ago, so it's not something that unusual in Boruenan.

When the three are eating, some pixies who have enticed by the scents gather. And then, the elves begin to gather when they see those pixies, the pattern that I've gotten used to see for a few days is reproduced. Apparently, the impact from, "The reproduction of the hero's will, hamburg", is really strong as more people have gathered than usual, and I'm made to replenish the dishes several times at the kitchen together with Lulu.

Lulu and me are looking at people who are enjoying the meal as if competing over it at the dining hall while we're eating fruits and presents on the small bowls that the elves who have come to eat have brought. I've used up a lot of meat I have in stock, but since there are still quite a lot even while excluding the whale meat, it's probably alright for the time being. Besides, I've acquired a lot of cattle and goats from the elves. I keep the acquired cattle together with the horses in a giant hole beside the root of the arbor. I leave the care to the living dolls the elves have deployed.

Of course, Mia and her parents have also come. She wanted some tofu hamburg steak, so I put not only soybeans on it but also fat-less meat that made 30% of the steak. I couldn't taste the meat when I sampled it, so Mia ate it without problem too.

Let's tell Mia about it after I've increased the meat ratio a bit more.

◇

I'm exchanging hamburg steak recipes with Nea-san while drinking the green tea that Lulu's made. Nea-san usually talks with single words, but she becomes talkative when it's about cooking methods and ingredients. I've already given her the recipe itself that I've written on the paper earlier.

I can see Lua-san, the miko, pestering Aialize-san from the edge of my view. Looks like they have some kind of business.

I entrust Lulu and Arisa to accompany Nea-san, and invite Lua-san and Aialize-san to another room.

"I'm really sorry, we've made you to attend us..."

I encourage them to sit while telling Lua-san to not mind about it.
Aialize-san seems to be shy of strangers as she's only fidgeting around without talking, so I'm mainly conversing with Lua-san. Then, the irritated Lua-san begins to press on Aialize-san.

"Go on, Aze-sama."
"Um, yes, that."

Aialize-san talks while facing Lua-san, not me, but Lua-san forcefully twists her head toward me. Err, I understand how you feel, but her neck will be hurt you know?
Aialize-san who crosses views with me and looks like she's on her wit's end speaks bombshell remarks at extreme pace.

"You're getting along well with the black dragon! Today you're not Kuro the hero are you!"
"Wait, Aze-sama."

Lua-san calms Aialize-san down in a hurry.

"Err, what are you talking about?"
"I'm sorry. Please allow me to talk about it."

I was playing dumb, but it seemed they had found out about me being the hero Kuro from the spirit light back then. People that let out spirit light seem to be abnormal even from Lua-san's memory, "There is no way there are two of them in the same time period." she smiles wryly.

It seems that Lua-san's familiar was watching the latter half of the rampage between the black dragon Heiron and me, and the party after that from afar. I surely felt a lot of frightened gazes at that time, it must have slipped among them.
Looks like they think I'm using an advanced nature magic spell, [Fake Patch], to make my name and title become different from that time.

"And now, as for the main subject--"

Normally, I expect them to demand, "Do this and that if you want us to not talk.", but somehow, I can't imagine the elves here to utter such words. Even if they wish something, they look like the type who will ask for help instead of bargaining for it.

"I will! Teach you!"

Aialize-san grasps her fists tightly and declares so as she stands up. I don't know what she's going to teach me, but I wait for her next words.

She seems to be embarrassed with my stare as she crouches down while turning red. She's the delicately troublesome type isn't she.

"So, that, like the way to suppress the spirit light! Or the way to prevent the spirits from gathering."

She continues her words as she hides herself behind Lua-san.
How do I say this, she looks like a timid teacher who's hiding behind her middle school student's back when she's doing that with the petite Lua-san like that.

Thus, I'm going to be taught by the extremely unreliable Aialize-sensei.

9-18. Ishibutai Training

Satou's here. There are a lot of manga set during the Heian period, thus, there are a lot of masterpieces. I read the complete set of, "It's a wonderful HEIANKYO", that my childhood friend had recommended.
What I thought during that time was if the sleeves of kariginu the characters are wearing wouldn't get caught on tree branches if they went to hunt with it? Such was my question. I wonder if people really used that clothes for hunting~
<TLN: Kariginu is a type of traditional Japanese clothes.>

◇

"Fooo~! Heian Romance kitaa!"

It looks like my clothes is the reason why Arisa shouts strangely.
I've been given clothes for training from Aialize-san, but I wonder if it's an influence from the hero Daisaku, or other Japanese people, the clothes is a kariginu--I guess it's easier to understand if I say that it's an onmyouji clothes.
The inside garment is a white unlined kimono, but the outer garment and the sashinuki hakama are green of different brightness each. Fortunately, there's no eboshi.
<TLN: Well, he's wearing traditional clothes, so you can google each of those terms if you're curious what they look like.>

"Master, you're wonderful."
"Master looks manly with the robe or armor, but the elf native dress also suits you well."
"They're good clothes with high magic defense."

Lulu seems to like it too. Let's make some junihitoe later.
Looks like Nana has specially used [Sense Magic] to check these clothes. Just like Nana's said, these clothes are made from Yuriha fiber that's also used to create Arisa's and Mia's robes. It seems that you can compose a defensive

film magic circuit on the surface of the fabric by weaving the fiber with some special method. The function can deploy a defensive film that resembles the body surface of the black dragon. Monsters above certain levels are naturally equipped with the film, but with these clothes, looks like you can also use it by putting a little magic into the clothes.

"Pochi is also going to train nodesu!"
"Tama too~?"

I was thinking what was the rustling about, turned out the two had changed to the Shinsegumi costumes from the duchy capital back then. I was going to refuse the two since it seemed that the training this time wouldn't go well if there were a lot of people around, but apparently, the training of the two is slightly different.

"Shagnig's invited us nodesu."
"Treasure hunt~"
"Shagnig is this playful Leprechaun old man, he's invited them to the playground where the elves children play."
"It looks to be a facility arranged with safe mock traps, and living dolls that are made to look like monsters."
"Reporting myself to participate in the exercise."

Arisa complemented Pochi's and Tama's words while slurping her drool. Since Liza and Nana are also going to participate, I allow it. The playground for the children of those indulgent elves shouldn't be dangerous.
The one who designed that playground is an elf who was the teacher of the teacher of Shagnig, but the one who actually built it was his teacher, a Spriggan called Rileks. At the present time, seems he's gone to observe the Saga empire labyrinth in order to gain new ideas. The one who designed the playground has gone away for more than 100 years from the elves hometown, so I likely won't see him.

◇

Together with Lua-san who's come to pick me while wearing miko outfits, I arrive at a rocky area that overlooks some waterfall, around 30 kilometers

away from the world tree. We moved by using the Dryad's [Teleport(Relocate). It's convenient enough even though it can only be done within Boruenan forest.

At the inner part of the rocky area, there's an ishibutai with a huge rock. <TLN: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishibutai_Kofun >

Aialize-san is on the center of that ishibutai.
No well, it's fine that you're there.

What are those clothes.

White shirt and tight skirt, and there are glasses with triangular lenses as well. She's tied her hair into a bun on her back, and left only two bangs at the right and left on the front. That short wand probably acts as the instructor stick.

It's the so called stereotypical female teacher clothing.

Hero Daisaku.... Please be moderate with the culture hazard.
Well, I guess it's fine since it's a feast for my eyes.

"Satou-san, you're late."

You shouldn't do cosplay if you're going to blush anyway.
I'd like to keep staring at her, but then the story won't progress, so I work the [Poker Face] skill hard.

"I'm sorry for being late."
"Aze-sama, please don't play around and change into the priest outfits."
"Isn't it fine, Daisaku's even said that these clothes give +1 effect to the teaching skill."
"That is a joke of his."

Aialize-san is shocked towards what Lua-san's said about the [Teaching Skill +1] being a lie rather than her scolding. I wonder why, maybe she really did believe it.

I gaze at the superb view of the waterfall on top of the ishibutai until after

Aialize-san has pulled herself together. It's quite a spectacle for multiple waterfalls to fall onto one pool despite not to the degree of Niagara. Water are also flowing down from the rocks that are floating along the steep cliff. I wonder if it works like the (Water Bottle) I have? It's quite a strange sight (fantasy).

Since I can hear a cough of someone clearing her throat, I turn around. Aialize-san who has changed to miko clothes is there. It was hard to restrain myself from turning as the rustling sound were inviting.

"Then please drink this before we begin the training."

Aialize-san presents a folded paper with some red power inside.
I wonder what is this, it's more transparent even compared to the magic core powder.

I feel like I've seen it somewhere.

Right, it's similar to the ruby powder in the jewels workshop at duchy capital. The powder occasionally emit some light, it's probably some kind of magic medicine. The AR indicates that it's [<<Powder of Philosopher's Stone>>]

Philosopher's stone?!

"This is?"
"It's the powder of miracle stone. Although it can help pregnant women who drink it during the delivery, its main use is to augment magic effect."

Lua-san answered my question.
Seems that it's stimulated some strange rivalry from Aialize-san as she begins to talk smoothly.

"It's a valuable item as only one pebble can be harvested from the world tree in a year! That's why, you can't spill it."

I see, it's harvested from the world tree huh.
I wonder why do I feel that it's like a calculus.
<TLN: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calculus_%28medicine%29 >

I take the red powder into my mouth, and flush it down the throat with the water that Lua-san's has passed to me.
There's no taste. The Magic Perception skill tells me the movements of the powder. Although little, mana gush out from the powder.

"Then, let's start with the warm-up. Mimic me as I move okay."

I mimic Aialize-san's movements while confirming it with space grasp. The exercise is quite full of body motion. Seems that these movements are for spreading the powder to my whole body. I understand that the powder is absorbed when it's reached my stomach, and carried to my whole body via the blood flow.

"Next, put your mana throughout your body."

I fill my body with mana as instructed. It's similar like when the self-healing kicks in. I'm careful as to not let the mana flow to the kariginu with yuriha fiber.

The powder in my blood absorb the mana as I fill my body with it.

"You're good."
"That's true, normally the mana would have leaked to the yuriha fiber clothes, and one wouldn't be able to circulate the mana well, but he did it smoothly."

I'm happy to be praised, but is it fine to continue as it is?
The adjustment is relatively hard, so I don't have any margin to speak.

After the powder in the bloodstream have absorbed certain amount of mana, it's releasing the mana this time. This feeling, I guess it's about the same with the holy light that the holy sword emit.

"Listen well, you have to seize the overflowing mana in your body, and hold it down. Then, spread it on the surface of your body as if you're making a thin film."

I see, it's the typical genius' way of teaching. However, I somehow

understand.
By using the time when I seize Zen's shadow whips as a reference, I grasp it. Then, I spread that mana thin. Since I have some experience of making thin film version of the flexible armor, it's relatively easy.

>[Spirit Light Control Skill Acquired]
>[Mana Control Skill Acquired]

"Alright, it's a success."
"Eh?! Ah, it's true. I nearly cannot see the spirit light."

Lua-san confirmed as she turned her eyes silver to the spirit seer version. Unfortunately, since I can't see the leaked spirit light in the first place, I'll believe in Lua-san's words.
Moreover, I've also understood that the mana that have always been leaking from my body for a bit have mostly stopped leaking. Since the leak in this case can be stopped with the spy skill, the mana control skill might be unnecessary. Let's check the difference with mana operation skill when it's time for me to activate it.

"You're quite good, normally it would have taken several years."
"I think it's already not at such level. Heroes are really abnormal aren't they."

Lua-san is shocked, but I feel it's not quite right for me to console that, so I ignore her. I thanked the two for the assistances, fix my appearance, and turned around, but it seemed to be premature.

"Then, let's start the second round of the training."
"That's right, we've used the valuable miracle stone after all, so let's finish the next lesson while it's still effective."
"This time you have to thin out the mana film only on the eyes part, and then slightly open holes on it."

Don't say that so easily.
It's hard to operate by parts, um. Yup, that went well.

"Look at both my hands okay. ■■■■■■■■ ■■ <<Summon Water Element>>"

Water overflow from both Aialize-san's hands that she's thrust above. After a while, the water formed into a ball that floats lightly slightly above her hands.

I stare hard at it as instructed.

Concentrate.

I can't see anything beside water--no, there's a small blue light with indefinite form. It can't be seen when I stare hard, but on the contrary, I can see it when I'm not focusing.

>[Spirit Seer Skill Acquired]

It was unexpectedly easy to get. I wonder if it's due to the philosopher's stone.

"I see it."
""Eh?!""

Eh? Why are they so surprised.

"Are you sure?"
"Yes, it's a bluish light with indefinite form right."
"That, that's right."
"That's amazing, there's only 1 among 100 elves who can obtain it."

One to a hundred doesn't seem to be that rare.

"Alright, then let's start the third round! Let's employ the spirits!"

Aialize-san whom in high tension declares so while raising her arms overhead.
It'd be a gentleman of me to use [Dry] to dry her clothes now, but just for a bit more, only a teeny bit more, I want to enjoy this scene.

Miko clothes wet from water is nice, isn't it.

9-19. Ishibutai Training (2)

Satou's here. ECO thing had spread on various things, but I guess the closest one to me was the solar power for home. We have magic in the other world, I wonder if that can be considered as ECO?　Where does that mana come from in the first place anyway.

◇

"Here I go, ■ Wind."

First, Aialize-san shows an example.

Since I've activated the spirit seer skill, I can clearly see what Aialize-san's done.
With just one word she had chanted the spell that made the colorless spirits gather around her, which then turned into the green colored wind elemental spirits without a pause, and invoked the magic to create the [Wind] phenomenon.

The strength is only around (Air Hammer), but the chant is terribly short.

"See? The manifested magic is no different than normal magic, but the chanting is short and the required mana is very much less as the advantages."
"On the other hand, it's powerless at places without spirits."

Lua-san added the disadvantages that Aialize-san had forgotten to say.
It's unclear as to what she means by places without spirits, but it seems that there aren't many spirits in man-made places, and monsters' dwellings. I understand the latter. They probably become the fodders for monsters like the armor newts back then.

When I activated the spirit seer skill, I was treated to the view of precious metal colored light centered on gold color emitted from Aialize-san. Lua-san

has faint flickering light of cold color type. From what can I see on the two, spirit light doesn't seem to have fixed color, it can change to a degree. I can also see it on the flying birds above the waterfall, but the light is quite faint, it's hard to make it up.

The light that leaks out from my body is of pale white.
When I try to release the restrained spirit light, light so intense, it makes you think your eyes have stopped functioning, dye the surrounding. The spirits around the waterfall have gathered with terrible speed. I can't see quite well since the spirits are obstructing the view, but the light emitted by me is primarily of warm color, it's crude rich color.
Mia has commented that it's [Beautiful], but aesthetically speaking, I think the light emitted by Aialize-san is far more beautiful.

Oops, I can't see the surrounding like this.
I converge the spirit light in a hurry, and make it stop leaking outside. The spirits who have lost their goal scatter unsteadily. The only spirits remaining are mostly the ones who are attracted to the spirit light emitted from Lua-san, and Aialize-san, the world is back to normal. They're slow compared to when they're gathering.

"You've already been able to control it at will haven't you. Your adaptability is amazing isn't it. Right, Aze-sama."
"Y, yeah."

Aialize-san seems to have been dazzled as she answers Lua-san half-heartedly while blinking repeatedly.

"I'm sorry Aialize-sama. I relaxed the control since I wanted to confirm something for a bit."
"I, it's your first time, so it can't be helped."

Huh?　Aialize-san's shyness has been activated. Even though she was able to talk straight to me a while ago, she turned toward Lua-san again when she talked to me. It might have been too dazzling.

"R, rather than that! Try it."
"Yes, ◆ Wind."

Oh? Slight breeze blows even though I've failed the chanting. I wonder if the spirits are being considerate?

"Ara? Are you not good with chanting?"
"Yes, I can't do it well no matter what I do."
"Yet, didn't the wind blow just now?"
"The spirits might be being considerate."

I reply Lua-san with my hunch, but she denies it readily.

"That's not happening. With the exception of something like Dryad, spirits don't have ego, or rather, intelligence. Their only roles are to mechanically take mana from the earth veins, and deliver the mana to creatures that need it."

Hee.
Then, I won't get to meet something like a sexy Undine onee-san huh. That's unfortunate.

"Is that really so? They're saying something when a lot of them gather sometimes you know."

Oh, Aialize-san presents a dissenting opinion.

"Aze-sama is the only one who says something like that. The other high elves aren't saying that right?"
"Uu, that's true but. I really feel that they're saying something."

Aialize-san who have been denied by Lua-san puffs her cheeks and turn away. Her reaction is like Mia.
There's a high possibility that she's just imagining it, but it's not necessarily good to decide that it has to be a misunderstanding. Even during game development, when we deemed that it was, "Just your imagination," during the debugging process, most of it got found by the market instead.

"May I test it once?"
"Mou, even you Satou-san."
"Try it! You'll absolutely hear it!"

I test it after the two approve.
When the light dazzles, I endure the spirits' assaults, and wait for the wild dance of the spirits to end. After about 10 minutes, the spirits has surrounded me like a cocoon. When I look closer, they don't seem to be still, but they're circling around from a distance relaxedly.

Fumu, I don't hear anything though.
I guess it's just Aialize-san's imagination?

Right then, I receive some microscopic amount of mana from the spirits.
I wonder if this is the signal of intent?　The moment I recognize it, I can hear little little commotion together with a sense as if something has clicked.

They were certainly trying to communicate something, but unfortunately I couldn't understand more. It feels like trying to listen to hustle and bustle 100 meters ahead. I didn't get any skill too, so there might be some kind of condition to hear the spirits' voices.

"They seem to be trying to say something, but I can't understand what is it."
"That's right! I want to hear it at least once."
"Satou-san, you're not kidding aren't you?"

I told the perplexed Lua-san that it was not a joke.

◇

Now then, unfortunately I couldn't employ the spirits at all.
I had expected it already, just like with magic, I couldn't chant the spirit employment well too.

Due to careless mistake of Aialize-san who tried to show an example, I had gotten soaked together with Lua-san, but I didn't have any complaint since I obtained spirit magic skill at that time. Aialize-san who was disheartened from Lua-san's scolding was adorable.

"That reminds me, how do the changing of spirit light strength work?"

"I wonder?"
"Wait, Aze-sama."

Lua-san makes a retort to Aialize-san who tilts her head while putting her finger on her cheek. Lua-san explained.

"In case with people, it's not because of the difference in mana pools, in truth, we don't know much about it. In case with the earth veins, the location with thick flow emits stronger light. The area around the source especially shines intensely."
"That's right. If I'm not mistaken, yes, there's a source on the basin of the waterfall here."

Eh?!
I involuntarily drop my line of sight after hearing Aialize-san's words. When I activate spirit seer skill, there's really light leaking from the waterfall basin.
The light isn't that strong even though the water isn't muddy.

"There are all sort of sources after all."

Lua-san came out with follow-up-like words as she seemingly saw my disappointed expression.

"Now that you mention it, what are sources?"
"I guess they're the holes where the earth veins gush out?"
"That's right, there are more than 100 of them on this continent, and among them, the scale of the one on the dragon valley is extraordinary. We don't quite know the total number of sources that are as small as this waterfall basin one."

The source of dragon valley huh, I'm positive that I've ruled over it. The cause of my spirit light might have been that unexpectedly. According to Lua-san, there are many things that are built on top of sources, like cities or labyrinths. The small sources become the dwellings of monsters or mythical beasts, or get to have some magician build a tower on it.
Fumu, judging from this story, the maze of Trazayuya should have been built on top of a source, but I didn't get to rule it like with the dragon valley. I wonder if there's a limit of being only able to rule one source?

I watched the world tree behind me with spirit seer since It caught my attention.
The body of the tree is shining dazzlingly. Moreover, when I strain my eyes, I can see concentric circles of light rings spreading like ripples around the tree branches.

"Isn't it beautiful?"
"Yes, very much so. Is that world tree a source too?"
"No, it's different--"
"Aze-sama."
"--, that's not from the earth veins, but from the void, err, I wasn't supposed to say it was I?"
"Well, I don't mind if it's Satou-san, but please don't spread it to the outside world okay."

I nod to Lua-san. Aialize-san who has confirmed that continues speaking.

"Do you know that there are ether flowing in the void?"
"I'm sorry, I'm ignorant."
"Ara, you can just study if you don't know. Ether is--"

Aialize-san proudly explained about ether, but when she was explaining the fifth element after the four primary, earth, water, fire and wind elements, she cut the complicated talk in one stroke, and so, in short, the intermediary substances in the outer space are massive amount of mana that have been blown.
<TLN: The author use 'mana' not the 'maryoku', or magic power here. I dunno if they're the same at this point.>

"--and then you see, the world tree use its foliages, or rather its root, or rather, terminals to suck mana from the flow of ether. And then, the released mana are sent deep into the ground which activate earth veins of the earth. The light of that spirit tree is the figures of the spirits who have gathered on the leak of the mana flow that's going from the sky to the earth."

I see~
It's a gigantic magic device I guess. However, Aialize-san. She's explaining

very fluently, completely unlike before.

"If such thing was to be known to greedy people, there would be a lot of countries that would aim for the world tree starting from Boruenan, so please keep this a secret. "

It's the so-called solar power unit with large output after all. They can do something great if they can monopolize it. I promised the two that I would absolutely never reveal it. I said to them that I wouldn't mind to be binded with [Geass] or [Contract], but she smiled wryly while saying, "You don't have to go that far."

I was quite serious, but I wonder if the elves don't have much sense of crisis?
I confirm it to Lua-san.

"If the world is going to be destroyed because of the mismanagement of the world tree, divine punishments will fall from the gods, so I think the worst won't happen."

That reminds me, this is a world where gods exist huh.

But, well, I will be careful as to not reveal it to anyone. I carved so in my heart.

9-20. The Spriggan's Training Site

Satou's here. Relative to the number of people who play the nonobligatory tutorial parts of games, it's hard to make them you know.
In real world, they are training or OJT, but I wonder if it's effective~

◇

When we were tidying up after the training was over, a [Telephone] came up.

It's from Arisa.

"Umm, hello, is this the house of Pendragon-san?"

I can hear Arisa speaking with slightly higher voice, I desperately try to endure my exhaustion.
You think this is a landline of old?

"Heffo, hooissit?"
<TLN: Yes, it's just as incorrigible in the raw.>
"Ah, I'm sorry, I got the number wrong."

I felt slightly mischievous, so I pretended to be someone else. I thought that Arisa would immediately booed, but she plainly apologized and cut off the telephone.
I was just joking, but was Arisa the type who's not good with phone calls?
While feeling slightly apologetic, I call Arisa back with [Telephone].

"Y, yes, this is Arisa Pendragon speaking!"

I want to retort, but I'll endure it. There's no doubt that something is happening, so I look there with [Clairvoyance].

"Arisa, it's Satou, did anything happen?"

"Ah, I'm glad, some old man I don't know received the telephone just now, I was surprised."

I saw Arisa who was flustered.
She doesn't seem to be injured, but it sure is awful.

"And so, we've screwed up for a bit, won't you come save us?"
"OK, I'll go immediately."

I reply Arisa with two words, and ask Aialize-san to get Dryad teleport us to the attraction where Arisa and the others are. The place seemed to be famous as we immediately departed when I told them the name of the attraction I had heard from Arisa.

◇

"This is the training place for the third fairy."

The black building that looks like a deformed bat seems to be the entrance. I enter to the red mouth that opens. It's really attraction-like.

This attraction has a lot of silly traps, and has become the playground for the elf children.
It seem to be play where children have to clear the eight attractions that are appropriate to their ages. Children who don't have very bad reflexes can clear them easily, but there are exceptions in everything-- and one of them is Aialize-san. She wanted to follow me, but she stopped with the frantic look of Lua-san.

She looks to be the clumsy element, so let's make her wait.
Just in case, I ask Lua-san to call for other help if I'm too slow in returning.

When I went inside, there's a living doll with torn neck lying on the floor. Judging from the state of its neck, the cause is probably Liza's spear. She really shouldn't break the attractions.

I use [All Map Exploration] and check the internal structure of this place.

It's quite wide, about 6-stories building big.

Everyone seems to have been divided into three groups.
Liza, Lulu and Pochi are the closest to me. Arisa and Mia are in the middle.
The farthest ones are Tama, Nana, and the tour guide this time, Shagnig-shi, the leprechaun.

Huh? Did Lulu and Mia come along too.

I make use of quick dressing skill to change, from the borrowed kariginu, into work clothes that are okay even if they get dirtied.

I set marker on the shortest route, and run with sky drive. Among the innumerable traps that I've found with trap discovery skill, I only cancel the ones that are unavoidable by using [Magic Hand] remotely.

Every trap seems to have been made with concern as to not injure.
Instead of poison gas, it spews strange irritant gas, there's knee-deep water in the bottom of the pit holes, the arrows shot from the trap have shock absorbed leather on its pointed end that even if you're hurt by it, it won't be serious.

When I avoid the traps, living dolls that are made to look like monsters attack from the back. There are colors painted on the place that seem to be its weakness, and it's made to stop if you hit that place with a wooden sword or your fist.

However, the layout is quite unpleasant.
Like having another trap right after you've avoided a trap, or getting attacked by the fake monsters just when you think that you've reached the safety zone, it reminds me of the consumers trap surprise.

I arrive at the room where Liza and the others are, in one minute. I had passed through some corridors and stairs, it seemed to be quite deep underground.
Liza has been caught in a web trap that has been lifted about 6 meters high to the ceiling while looking very unwilling.

There's a wall modeled after a monster's face right beside Liza. And then,

Pochi has been eaten to half of her body on the monster's gaping mouth. I see her feet hanging full of discontent. Of course Pochi is unhurt since it's an attraction.

However, how did she even get stuck being eaten like that. No, when I look closer, there's a protrusion that seem usable as a scaffold near Pochi. The trap is probably made to eat someone who's climbing to save their friend.

And also, where is Lulu?
I turn my head, and she seems to have been caught on a wire trap with both her leg and an arm lifted, and cannot move nearby the place where the floor has disappeared near the door on the other end of the room. All the wires only go to the height of her back. It's probably made as to prevent blood from going up to the victim's head.

However, Lulu's legs seems to have stepped on the trap as both are lifted to different directions. Her posture looks embarrassing for a maiden. I have to secretly fix her rolled up skirt with [Magic Hand] while being unseen before I call them out.

"I've come to help."
"Ah, master!"
"I'm very sorry, master."
"Master, Pochi is over here~ heelp~"

I quickly rush to Lulu, and cut the hemp ropes with a dagger.
Next, I go up beside Pochi with sky drive, and press the release button right next to the trap to save her. I quickly catch her on my arms since she was going to slide and fall.

"Thank you nanodesu. Mia's said that there's a button to save Liza on the other side of this wall nodesu."

I see.
I use [Magic Hand] to press the button since it's clearly there. I hear some rattling nearby, and then the rope that lifts Liza lowers. It's quite particular about the detail as it's lowering slowly to prevent serious injuries.

"Master, please save Arisa and Mia. The two have fallen into this hole."

Lulu points to a caved in floor that has created a deep hole. Looks like Arisa and Mia are over there.

"I understand."
"Those two must be alright aren't they."

Lulu joins her hands together and asks as if praying.

"Yeah, they're alright of course. Arisa was the one who had called me here after all."

When I confirm on the map, consecutive cave-ins don't seem like it'll happen, so I evacuate the three to take a refuge in a relatively structurally-safe place. Liza, and Pochi wanted to come along, but since they had just shown their shameful sights, they meekly withdrew.
I intended to go back quickly, but I took out a bag with some canteens and baked sweets from the Item Box and gave it to Lulu.

I jump into the collapsed place while waving to the three.

I check the collapse while regulating my speed with sky drive.
Apparently, somethings are advancing through the underground, and have created crevices on many floors around this area. That somethings are the level 20 worm monsters which seem to be the cause. According to the map, they have made a nest underground 2-3 kilometers ahead. I'll take care of them later.

◇

At the end of the descent, the two are there being wrapped by feelers from a living doll posing as a plant monster.

"Thank you for waiting."
"Fast. What kind of cheat did you use this time."
"Satou."

I think Arisa misunderstands the meaning of cheat sometimes.

"The Dryad helped me come here."
"Wa, by Dryad, do you mean that green little girl? Don't tell me, she robbed your lips again~~."
"That didn't happen."

She's energetic even though she's being wrapped.
I looked for the release device, but I couldn't reach it since it had been buried by the collapsed floor stones. Since it can't be helped, I cut the feeler and release them. I might be destroying the attractions, but it's already half-destroyed anyway.

"Thank you."

I release Arisa who's nearby. She should have just cut the feelers with space magic and escaped. When I told her so while freeing Mia, surging wave of protests came from Arisa.

"The power of space magic is great you know. I would cut my own body if I used it to cut feelers that were so close. A maiden won't be able to become a bride if she's hurt before it right--no, I can get some injuries here, and force him to make me her bride can't I?!"

The latter part of Arisa's scheme was said in whisper, but I could clearly hear it with straining ears skill. I warn her, "Be moderate with your scheme okay."

"Thanks."

Mia hugs me when I've finished saving her, so I put her down. I pick up a long wand that has been dropped on the ground and pass it to Mia. Mia probably couldn't escape with magic because she didn't have the wand. Feel like I've heard that she's said her aim is off without a wand.

Now then, it seems there's no exit here.

"How about the other three?"
"Liza is caught on the trap above this room right, they're operating

separately to release her."
"Nn."

I carry the two back to the above room for the time being. Since they're light, I carry them together at once.

"Don't carry me on your shoulder~"
"Objecting luggage."

Their maidens' hearts would be hurt if I treat them like luggage I guess? Well, forgive me.

When I get back to the upper room, I see Tama waving on the opposite room from the mouth of the monster that had caught Pochi. I can see Nana and Shagnig-shi behind her.

Apparently, Tama and the others were going ahead to save Liza and the others who had been caught by traps, but the floor where Arisa and Mia were standing collapsed right after they entered the next room. Tama and Shagnig tried to go back in a hurry, but the door seemed to have been warped, and they couldn't go back. Since they couldn't help it, they advanced through the maze to the room where the button to release Liza was, that is the other side of the monster mouth that had caught Pochi and rejoined.

Arisa seemed to have contacted me first thing after thinking the possibility of other members getting injured from another collapsing accidents. GJ, Arisa.

"I am truly ashamed. Letting such dangerous situation to happen during my tour."

Shagnig-shi gets down on his knees to apologize, but the unexpected accidents aren't really his responsibility. He doesn't seem to be a monster parent too. Since he had checked the place many times three days ago, the worms probably made the holes around 1-2 days ago.

Today's exploration has ended since the facility is going to be reinspected.

Tonight's prey are... seven Metal Worms.

9-21. Pests Extermination

Satou's here. There are many cases where the gathered experts can't come up with a solution, yet a single word casually said by an amateur becomes the impetus to solve the problem.
Turning the problem into a catastrophe from the single word of the higher-ups also happen a lot though.

◇

"Yes? Pests extermination expert is it?"

I stopped my hands which were constructing a living doll, and parroted the word of the elder elf-san who had visited the workshop.

Here is the workshop of the living dolls crafter, Sotorineya-san. The living dolls that are on the attraction the other day, and most of the ones in the town are his works.

Before he started teaching me, he warned that even if I learned it, I wouldn't be able to reproduce it outside since the raw material doesn't exist there. As I understand, they use philosopher's stone, like the one from before, as the core which acts as the power reactor, and that can't be produced outside of Boruenan forest.

Nevertheless, the other structures beside that one look usable so this endeavor won't be useless. I want to know it so bad, particularly the structure of the information IO, and the AI logic control.

Putting that aside, it's about the elder-san.

"I've heard from Shagnig-san. You seems to have wonderfully exterminated the five and seven poisonous insects that had bred at the training site.

We're expecting much from that skill, please lend us your wisdom."

Ah, that huh.
There were some cave-in incidents at the training ground where Arisa and the others were playing yesterday, it was probably about the investigation that I did together with Shagnig-san at the remnant of the site. Looks like the elders have known about how I exterminated the poisonous insects that had bred to become so many at that time.

By equipping Insect Slayer title, and using [Bug Wiper] magic at full power, it was a simple work. I tried unequipping the title at my second try, but it wasn't any different. I can't decide if the title doesn't have any additional effect, or if it's because it was too overkill in the first place.

"If you're fine with me, I will gladly give some counseling."

Or rather, I'll even go and exterminate the pests.

I've been taught many things like the way to conceal the spirit light by Aialize-san, and many knowledges and recipes from the other elves after all.

The elder calms me who has stood up enthusiastically.
Since they don't seem to be in a hurry, they will send someone to pick me at the place where I'm staying tomorrow morning.

That day, the living doll that I had finished constructing couldn't even stand up.
Looks like it's a long road ahead.

◇

"Now, Satou of Shiga kingdom! I've come to pick you."

The one who has come here is Aialize-san.
What are you doing high elf-sama.

"Please call me Satou. Then, shall we go."

"Yes."

Aialize-san whose face has reddened holds out her hands slanting from below.
Does this mean that we should join our hands?

We might be going with space magic.
I grasp her hand while thinking such thing.

Arisa leans her body from the balcony and shouts, "Guilty!" Pochi and Tama have also joined saying, "Guilty", but I wonder if they know the meaning~?

Although it might be called space magic, we entered to a block of the world tree with the Dryad's [Relocate] like before.

It might be boorish of me, but there wasn't any need to join hands right?

◇

The sky is filled with stars.
Rather, this is the first time I see stars that aren't twinkling with naked eyes.

The place where the Dryad has taken us is the observatory room at the center of the city part on the zenith block of the wold tree.
If the AR and the map are right, then we're about 300 kilometers high above the ground. We haven't reached the orbit of geostationary satellites, but this should have exceeded the stratosphere quite a bit. I guess it's in the slightly lower part of the low earth orbit?

Even though we're this high, the gravity is still at 1G, I wonder if it's due to magic?
No, before that, such long tree shouldn't have been able to hold its own weight. I timidly try to ask that matter to elder-san but--

"How is the tree not broken apart and destroyed."
"It's the gods protection."

Don't think that you can deceive me by using gods, protections and such. Apologize to physic teachers!

I wanted to shout, "Ugaa" like Arisa, but I forcefully held it down with my will. Since Poker Face-san is doing its best, the elder should not know it.

"I'm sorry, the elder is ignorant in the technical sort of things."

A researcher-like woman elf, Jia-san who's waiting beside us explains it to me.
I'm told that the countless branches of the world tree drive themselves into the adjacent sub-space (Isa Plane) like anchors which help distribute the world tree's weight and support it. I've abstained from understanding what the [Adjacent Sub-space] is, but it seems the weight of each branches isn't much by itself, so they're not disintegrating.

There's still something that bugs me, but I'll just regard it as some mysterious tree (Fantasy).

Let's cut to the chase.

"Please look at the branch ahead."

I look at the gigantic branch that extends on the empty air that Jia-san has pointed. The branch diverges innumerably in the middle of the way, and the last bunch look as thin as threads. It extends through as far as eyes can see, but Jia-san points out even further than that.
Aialize-san who looks bored beside me is looking through a telescope on her hands, is that some kind of magic? I can't help but feel that's not it. I'm interested in what kind of thing that Daisaku-shi has influenced it with, but let's not touch it now.

I can't see anything with normal sight, so I use [Distant View], [Looking Afar], [Night-Vision], [Light-Intensity Adjustment], and [Mana Perception] together to look.

Jellyfish?

"Is it about the jellyfish things that wrap their legs on the branch that looks

like a thread?"

Jia-san who's presenting a telescope to me stiffens, but she answers by just nodding her head.

However, why is it jellyfish in space. It should have been whales--no, Tuna. Yep, tuna fit the space well.

I expel the stupid thought in my head.
I've forgotten since I was drunk with the space-station like spectacles. It's a bit late, but I execute [All Map Exploration].
The branch only looks like a shining branch that extends up to one kilometer long from where I am, but I know from the map that it extends like a superfine thread for about 100 kilometers long.

This thread-like branch is probably scooping up the mana from the ether.

From what I've gathered with the map, these jellyfish are called [Evil Fish], they are around level 20-40 averaging at 30, they're just small fry monsters. However, there are 10.000 of them. They seem to have special racial ability called [Absorb]. When I look closer, their category is not monster but [Mysterious Creature]. The heck is that?

◇

"Those jellyfish are eating the mana that the world tree has gathered along the way. That's already troubling by itself, but they even plant their eggs in the world tree and breed."

I see, the pests extermination is about that jellyfish after all.
It's easy if I can just destroy every jellyfish around the tree.

"T, that is--"

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be that easy.

"--There are multiple reasons why we can't exterminate them."

The first one, the world tree defence mechanisms will burn you into a charred remain if you exterminate the jellyfish.

Hah? What the heck? I think so, and I ask again.
Apparently, the jellyfish have infected the world tree with their poison and make the world tree thinks that they're parts of it. The elves seemed to have tried to detoxify the world tree with magic, and made it sleep while they exterminated the jellyfish, but the scale of the world tree was too big, it was a failure.

The second reason, when the number of jellyfish have decreased below a certain point, they will multiply themselves explosively.

Nice for aquaculture! So I think, but it's not that easy.
When the jellyfish explosively multiply, they seem to consume the neighboring world tree's branches in large quantity. Furthermore, it will trigger the chain reaction from the nearby jellyfish and they will also proliferate, so if we can't exterminate them all at once, they will increase instead.

The third reason, there is a manaless zone around the jellyfish.

I don't understand the meaning so I inquire more, it seems that you can't use magic near the jellyfish.
Looks like this is why the jellyfish investigation doesn't progress. The elves call it the void, but it's practically the outer space, so they shouldn't be able to enter it without magic.
They also can't use the magic-made artificial life (living dolls) to attack the jellyfish since the defence mechanisms of the world tree turned the dolls into charred remains.

"It's quite terrible isn't it."
"It's really terrible you know~"

Jia-san wails like it's from the bottom of her heart to my 'it's other people's problem'-like thought. The dark circles under her eyes are deep.

Now then, I've thought of several ways to deal with them, but let's confirm them with Jia-san.

9-22. Pests Extermination (2)

Satou's here. Curry is great. You can make curry as long as the vegetables you put with the sauce made from curry powder are falling apart while you cook them. Even if the potatoes melt into powder-like thing, the curry is still curry nanodesu.

◇

"I want to confirm if you have investigated some things, is it fine?"
"Yes, we're fine with any opinion, so please."

Jia-san is glancing with eyes full of hope from below.
Ah, it's hard to say vague things in such atmosphere.

"Has anyone tried gathering them on one place and then shoot them with magic with great power from afar?"
"Yes, the Biroanan clan on the different continent did so, however, during the engagement the jellyfish kept propagating, while the world tree was counterattacking, so when every one of them had been defeated, half of the world tree's branches and the majority of the elves' life were lost."

Looks like there are world trees on another continents. Seems that Biroanan clan is a clan that's skillful with fire magic and quick to start a fight despite being elves. This might be a prejudice, but they don't really seem like elves~

"That clan is a bit different from others..."
"Jia, you shouldn't talk bad of other clan."
"I'm sorry, elder."

Aialize-san is nodding, "yep, yep", while folding her arms beside the elder.
That reminds me, she was here.

"What happened to that Biroanan clan and the world tree afterward?"

"They've defeated all of the jellyfish (Evil Jelly), but the mana that are sent to the earth from the world tree have decreased so much, nearly 30% of the continent become deserts or wastelands."

The damage is quite serious.
If we consider the indirect damage, isn't it worse than even the demon lord.

No one knows the detail about the long-distance attack that has been used by Biroanan clan, so the elder is going to inquire them.

"Then, the second point. Have you researched ways to capture the evil fish or such? It might be worth it to search for their elemental weakness, repulsing materials, or attracting materials (Pheromone)."
"Yes, both the Beriunan and Burainan clans should have researched them. The evil jelly elemental weaknesses are fire and heat. On the contrary, they seem to resist ice and darkness. I've never heard something like attracting material."
"Umu, I'll go ask about it from both clans."
"Yes, please."

The elder fluently makes a promise without putting an air to Jia-san who answers my question. Aialize-san is only nodding, 'yep, yep', beside the elder. Is that alright, high-elf.

"The third and the last, the world tree is going to counterattack if we harm the evil fish externally right, but do you know just how far it can be injured before the counterattack comes?"
"We've checked this with analysis skill, and it seems the world tree will counterattack if the evil fish health is decreased by 30%."

Then, I wonder if it's possible to debuff or neutralize it?
If it's possible to use long-range attack magic, shouldn't it also be possible to use long-range status magic?

"Have you tried putting the evil fish to sleep, then pull them away from the world tree, and massacre them?"
"It should also be in the reports from both Beriunan and Burainan clans--ah, there is. It's possible to make them sleep, but it seems that the evil fish are monitoring each other, and once one of them is pulled at a certain distance

away, the other evil fish will hinder it."

Jia-san turns the page of the paper file. It's surprising to see such low-tech things while we're in such a futuristic room.

Fumu, isn't fine if we just put them all to sleep?
I ask Jia-san so, but--

"That's impossible."

--it's rejected immediately. It says that once you've put the hundredth one to sleep, the first one will wake up. Moreover, they have high resistances against sleep and paralyze, it's hard to put them to sleep. The elves seem to have tried letting them absorb the mana from the sleeping potion, and it didn't show any noticeable effect.

They've tried to use water and wind magic, but magic can't penetrate the mana absorption zone around the evil fish if it's not at least intermediate level magic or above. Although, in case of the users whose magic penetrated the zone, even their elementary magic showed some effect on the evil fish, so their mana absorption zone probably isn't perfect.

For now, I ask elder-san to find out the details for "Hindering the evil fish."

The problem is their number and the distance.

◇

There are two cards in my hands that I can use to defeat the jellyfish before they can explosively propagate; [Meteor Shower], and [Laser]. I do have other techniques with high power, but these are the only two that can defeat 10.000 enemies on vast area in one shot.
First, [Meteor Shower] is out of question. The world tree is probably going to get destroyed along.

That means it's [Laser], but even if I shoot it as pulse laser, it has trajectory of line no matter what, so it'll end up felling many world tree's branches. If I

do it carelessly, I could even damage outsiders even if it's not of the elves.

I also think about massacring them by myself by using sky drive and ground shrink, but the range is too vast, it'll take a long time to defeat them by hands. I'm envious with the shounen manga protagonist who can move at light speed. It'll be a cinch if I have teleport magic.

Looks like my own power isn't enough.

I feel regretful to say that I'm of no use after I brace myself.

Elder-san, and Jia-san say, "No need to apologize", and, "I'm quite thankful for the attracting material idea", but I can't help but feel that I've overlooked something.

She's patting my shoulder as if comforting me, but you haven't done anything right?　High elf-sama?

◇

Now then, rather than satirizing Aialize-san, I should come up with something instead.

"What are you groaning about?"
"Ah～ there's a bit."

The day seemed to have got dark while I was brooding over without any good idea. Looks like everyone has come back from the training ground.

When I reply half-heartedly to Arisa's question while turning my eyes, not only Arisa, everyone is looking at me with worried looks.
No, Tama is doing things at her own pace, she's curling up like a ball on my lap.
Nana is like the usual too. She's playing with the pixies that she's caught by using cookies.

"Ah, sorry to make you worry. I need something to consult--"

I consult them about the jellyfish while leaving out the details.

"Fuhn, exterminating pests at an orchard huh. Can't you do it straightforwardly?"
"They've tried it already, it's no good."

"They'll be driven away if you make some noise~?"
"When you 'washa washa' they will run away nodesu."

Tama forms her hands to look like cat's paws, and spreads her arms wide. Pochi looks as if she's scared of Tama's hands, she's gesturing like she's running away in fluster. They're probably trying to show how bugs run away?

It seems doable if I can use [Fear] from mind magic, but there's no one that can make the scroll. I have [Bell of Fear] among the magic tools in my hand, I guess I should try its effect in some remote place. Ah, tools that make use of sound wave are useless in space huh.

"Magic."
"Ah, the insect repellent magic that was used before right. Master, if you use that magic, won't it be simple to exterminate the pests?"

Those are Mia and Lulu. It's the story about when there were a lot of small flying insects at the camping ground making them unable to sleep.
There's barely any elves that can use life magic, so it might be unknown to them unexpectedly. There are many derivatives of [Bug Wiper] magic, maybe I should go and get them in the duchy capital. If it's effective, I'll consider it lucky.

"You open an insect cage, and then put a delicious meat inside nodesu."
"Using traps is a good idea. However, I suggest that the bait to be something sweet."

Nana revises Pochi's suggestion.
Traps are a good idea, but it'll be difficult to prepare traps for 10.000 jelly.

"I think using smoke to smoke them out is a good idea, but I don't think

master will be troubled if that can settle it. How about unleashing birds and small animals that eat those insects yet don't harm the plants?"

Liza's suggestion is quite good, but unfortunately, I can't think of anything that can be the natural enemy of space jellyfish. The [Great Monstrous Fish (Tovkezeera)] from the other day seem like they will eat the jellyfish happily though.

"How about asking a puppeteer that become an insecteer, and have the insects leave the plant on their own to be exterminated?"

Arisa seems to be tired from the training today as she answers with some random idea.

"Ah, and also, this hit me from when Pochi talked about it earlier, but if you can't separate the bugs apart from each other, can't you just put them in the insect cages, and then take the cages away while they're like that~?"

When you consider just how many insect cages will be needed.... Oh?

Perhaps, this idea might be good?

Step 1: Put some to sleep and into the cage, then leave them alone.
Step 2: When we have caught them all, pull the cages away all at once from the world tree.
Step 3: Annihilation.

Looks good.
Step 1 looks like it'll need outrageous amount of works, but we can somehow do something to strengthen the cages. I don't have to worry about materials if I just use magic anyway, I'll look for something that's good against the [Absorption] racial ability of the jellyfish.

I can see the light somehow.
Let's consult various things with Jia-san tomorrow.

I go to Lulu who's gone head to prepare for dinner. The elves are going to eat together with us, so many married elf women have gathered in the spacious kitchen.

I've decreased the fat and increased the meat on the hamburg steak today. I've made different kind of hamburg steak with the soup for Pochi and the others, but beside that, Mia eats the hamburg steak with meat while saying, "It's more delicious than usual."

Fufufu, the next one will not be tofu hamburg with meat inside, but hamburg steak with tofu.

"Today is also peerless and wonderful nanodesu."
"Three consecutive hamburg steak~?"
"Delicious."

It's popular with the beastkin girls too.

"It's no good to always have the same menu, so I guess I'll make something different tomorrow."
"I, it's not not good nodesu!"
"Nn."
"The sauce and the garnish are different, so it doesn't feel like the same menu you know?"
"Everyday is hamburg steak."

As expected, I don't want it to be everyday.

"I want to eat omelet rice or curry!"

A request comes from Aialize-san who has slipped into the dining table before I knew it. Lua-san wipes the sauce on her cheek. Beside Mia and her family, the elves who come to the banquet is alternating everyday, but Aialiaze-san has the perfect attendance.

Nea-san told me that Daisaku-shi had always wanted to eat either of the dishes, but they couldn't reproduce it until the end. There's no tomato in the elf village huh. Let's share some and have Nea-san stock it.

Curry huh, I haven't eaten it in a long time. Arisa has also began singing a strange song, "Harahara, hara perape nyon, karakara karu da mon". That seems to be the song of curry.

<TLN: I guess, "Tummytummy, tummy hungryry nyon, emptyempty light damon." Apparently, it's Minami-ke's reference.>

Fortunately, I've acquired the recipe, so I'll just need to ask Nea-san if she has the required spices.
It's beef stew tomorrow. I'll see if Mia can detect the little bit of meat texture and fat on her share tomorrow.

I also need to prepare for the jellyfish extermination, tomorrow will be busy.

9-23. Pests Extermination (3)

Satou's here. Curry's garnishes change all the time, but the soy-sauce pickled Japanese leeks, and red pickled gingers are the standard. Depending on the local specialties or the restaurants, it seems that there are curries that use roasted cucumbers, sauerkraut, and even pickles.
To have so many variations like this, it really is a menu loved by Japanese after all.

◇

"Aze-sama, please be very careful."
"I'm fine, it's not even my first time."

While Lua-san is looking so worried, Aialize-san is full of confidence.

Actually, we're going to start the experiment of locking up the jellyfish with cages.
As expected, I didn't think it was fine for the top of the clan to tag along even if it was just for the formality, but I yielded when they said, "Optimum."

Apparently, the world tree regards high elves as one of its parts. Aialize-san told me that, unlike the case with the jellyfish, the high elves have always been like that from the beginning. I was curios with what she's said, but I was uncertain whether it was fine for an outsider to ask that, so I decided not to.

From Aialize-san's story, she can make the world tree think that several people she's brought together are its parts, but since this is an experiment that involve the use of magic, it's better to have few baggages, so I'm the only one who's going with her to observe the experiment. I'm not complaining since I want to go, but is it fine for Lua-san not to come?

She blushed when I asked her the reason for making me accompany her, so

I thought that there was a chance for me, but she told me that a hero who could battle the black dragon would be fine even if the jellyfish went amok. Please stop with the misleading gestures.

"Sa, err, you have finished your preparation right? Let's go then."

She was going to call my name, but she couldn't do it in the end. Since it's cute, I'll stop such boorish behavior like holding my hand out.

I grasp the hand of the slightly sulky Aialize-san that she has presented. She jumps out to the space while getting panicked for some reason. I also followed her using sky drive at the speed that won't break our joined hands.

Oh, I thought that it was dome made from some kind of glass, but it's some mucus-like membrane instead. I wonder if it's the sap of the world tree?
It's about 2 meters thick.

Outside of the membrane is the vacuum--

Umm, Aialize-san? It's painful though?

I cannot breath normally. My face and hair have started to frost. I don't think that I'm going to die so I check my status, my stamina and health have just been decreased by little, and the self-healing seems to be working as they're immediately healed.

I was certain that Aialize-san would use some kind of wind magic. I invoke [Canopy] to create a comfortable space. There's not enough air, so I take out the balloon from my storage, and replenish a little bit of air into the [Canopy]. I'll add oxygen from the balloon if the air become polluted.

Fuh, I breathe a sigh of relief.
It was good that I fill the remaining balloons with air. Even though I made them with the intention of playing with Pochi and Tama, I had forgotten.

>[Spacewalk Skill Acquired]
>[Survival Skill Acquired]

I've got myself some strange skills. I'd have loved ether operation skill

instead.
Sky drive is usable in the space, so I've decided that the spacewalk skill is a dead skill. Survival skill seems to be quite convenient, so I allocate it maximum points, and activated it.

"'What's the matter?'"
"'I wasn't able to breathe.'"
"'U~mm, I didn't tell you? You can't breathe in the void sky so, be careful okay.'"

You're late, Aialize-san.

"'And also, you shouldn't use too many magic. There aren't many spirits in the void sky, and the mana is thin so it's hard to recover magic power here.'"
<TLN: So, mana is different from maryoku (magic power) after all, sigh.>

She told me to go to the nearest world tree branch if I need to recover my magic power no matter what. The mana that have been collected by the world tree from the ether seem to be overflowing on its branch. And also, I'm warned to not touch the world tree's branches in the void sky since it might burn me as they're hot. Shouldn't the outer space be cold?

Come to think of it, we're talking normally. It's probably [Telephone] magic, but Aialize-san doesn't have space magic skill, so how is she able to use it?

"'Aialize-sama can use space magic huh.'"
"'I, I've learned this a long time ago, the skill has been lost with time, but I can still use the simpler one even now. If I'm in a place with a lot of spirits, I can also use the difficult ones.'"

I'm intrigued with the "The skill has been lost with time" line that she's said, but since we've gotten closer to the jellyfish, the chatter is over. I'll ask about it while I treat her with omelet rice tonight.

◇

It's huge.

The jellyfish in front of me is the average one at level 30, but it's bigger than even Heiron, the black dragon. It's about three times as big if the feelers are included.

"'First, I'll try with cages from space magic okay.'"

Although Aialize-san said space magic, she's actually chanting spirit magic. It's said that there is no spirit in the void sky, but it seems she has properly brought them along from the observation area earlier. It's the kind of shrewdness that doesn't seem like her at all, but it's most likely the result of many failures in the past. Those situations float on my eyes.

When the magic is finished, six boards appear around a jellyfish, the next moment, a cage with six boards appears.
The feelers that are too long to get inside the cage are cleanly cut and wriggle in the void sky. They're gradually moving away in the air, it's probably going to fall after the gravity pulls it.
I collect the feelers that have been caught on the world tree branches with [Magic Hand] to one place. And then I put them into the storage. The parts that have been cut don't seem to be living beings.

The jellyfish that has been caught is struggling in the cage, but the others jellyfish aren't reacting. The world tree is also silent of course.

Next, we move to near different jellyfish and put two of them into nature magic and light magic cages each.
Either magic can catch the jellyfish without any problem just like with the space magic. Fire, shadow, darkness, and gravity magic also have some capturing magic, but they seem to also deal damage, so we don't use them this time.

We tried to use Earth, Water, and Wind magic just in case, but since there are no [Water], [Air], and [Ground] in the void sky, these magic need more magic power than usual. In addition, its compositions seem to have weakened, as the jellyfish quickly absorbed the cages made from these three elements.

This jellyfish is very weak individually.
In fact, three of the jellyfish that had escaped the cages couldn't come close when I caught them with my [Magic Hand]. They're absorbing the [Magic Hand] but it takes quite some time to break it.

It's troublesome to manage them all the time so Aialize-san makes them sleep with wind magic. We confirmed that they wouldn't pursuit us if we took some distances away before they awoke.

While we were doing all that, the [Nature], and [Light] magic cages were destroyed.
The former took about two hours, while the latter continued on until about three hours. The first [Space] magic cages that has been made is still in good health even after five hours have elapsed now.

◇

However, you're good high elf-sama.
I'm sorry for thinking that you were just a piece of junk elf in my mind. I didn't think that she could use such varied magic like these.

We had some free time while we wait for the [Nature], and [Light] magic cages broke, so I did various experiments after I asked for the permission from Aialize-san.

First, the [Bug Wiper]. Unfortunately, it has no effect. They're not bugs after all. I tried getting close to the jellyfish and used magic, but I could use it without any problem. Aialize-san looked lightly surprised, so it was probably not normal. I feel that the MP consumption has increased for a tiny bit when I use magic.

I was panicking when the [Dry] magic almost damaged the jellyfish for more than 30% of its health, but I avoided the problem as I canceled the magic halfway.

Next, I'll try elementary level attack magic. First, I try to fire [Remote Arrow], and [Short Stun]. I thought that they would disappear when they

got close to the jellyfish, but they didn't, unlike the time with the wild boar king. The remote arrow normally damaged it, and the short stun made a gaping hole on it rather than fainting it. They're fragile just like how they look, I need to be more careful.

I'm intrigued with the [Magic-made artificial living beings] talk from the other day, so I ask Aialize-san to give a performance of it.

"U~n, I can't afford the magic power, so just do with a simple one okay."

Contrary to her half-hearted words, she's chanting the magic with quite proud-looking face.
Wait, Aialize-san?　Your MP is decreasing greatly you know?

"....■■ Magic Beast King Creation (Create Behemoth)"

A magic circle is formed in the void sky, and a creature that seem to be a mix of an elephant and a hippo appears from it. It's only half as big as the jellyfish, but it looks extremely strong on the outside. Its level is 50, its body is about as big an average destroyer.

However, this Behemoth-kun does not have wings.
It fell, pulled by the gravity, and it seemed to have been annihilated after leaving a red light far beyond.

"....■■ Magic Light Ball Creation (Create Wisp)"

Aialize-san made another artificial life in order to avoid my glance. It can fly this time. The wisp that has appeared is only about 10 centimeters long in diameter, and it's floating about while emitting faint white light.

The wisp is moving toward the jellyfish.
After the wisp gets to a certain range, it loses its outline and disappears. I see the base end of the jellyfish feelers absorbing the remaining light.

I continue on with physical attacks experiment.

The fairy sword cuts the feelers without any resistance, its body is fragile after all. The Ant Javelin that I've filled with magic power and thrown at the

jellyfish is unexpectedly caught by its feelers skillfully and got eaten. It looks to be practically easy to poison them.

The last one is [Bell of Fear] magic tools.
This magic tool isn't one that's made in present days, so I don't know the (menu) explanation. I can guess from the flow of the words I can read, but I'm not confident I can use it well. I was able to somehow identify the Command Word, so I thought that I should just try it.

"'Be afraid of me.'"

Oouu.
The jellyfish around 3 kilometers range of effect are attacking with electricity and feelers like they've gone mad. I carry Aialize-san with princess hug, and escape outside the electricity attacks.

As we have arranged beforehand, Aialize-san is going to put the jellyfish to sleep with wind magic--or at least that was plan. She's only saying, 'Au au' while blushing and not using magic. That reminds me, I've forgotten that she's someone who can't deal with close physical contact.

After leaving Aialize-san floating in a safety zone, I hurry back to where the jellyfish are.

I thought that the world tree was going to attack, but it seems to be okay as the jellyfish healths are still alright. I cut the feelers of the jellyfish that are tangling the world tree with the fairy sword, and leave only the body parts.

Next I put the three bodies-only jellyfish in physical cages that I've taken out off the storage. A bulky clay cage made with earth magic, a bronze cage, and the last is a transparent ice cage. Even though I've made them with various big sizes, the largest one is still barely enough.

I've used magic during their creations, but there's no trace of magic on them left now.

The bronze cage is smaller than the other two, so it's impossible to shove the jellyfish into it. They're too big to not even fit the 4LDK size. It can't be helped, I put another in the second ice cage I've made.

I thought that the jellyfish will immediately break through the ice cage, but there doesn't seem to be any problem.
Aialize-san and me go back to the observatory while sweeping the jellyfish feelers that have caught the world tree.

I leave Jia-san and the others to observe the time needed for the space magic cage, the ice magic cage, and the earth cage to break. If either of the physical cage can hold the jellyfish for a day, even the elves alone can probably deal with the pests.

As an apology and to soothe high elf-sama, I made the most delicious omelet rice. The fluffy egg wraps the chicken race that's filled with the fat from the fried chicken skin, put together with crispy chicken skin, paprikas, and green peas-like beans.
When Arisa made a request for me to draw a heart with the ketchup on her omelet rice, everyone asked me the same. Pochi's and Tama's shares are drawn with simple pictures of them. Mia and Aialize-san look very envious when they see those illustrations, but please bear with it. Eat them before it cool down.

There is a reason why I've not made curry.
I've acquired 80% of the spices from the duchy capital, and gathered the remaining 20% from Boruenan forest.

But, there is no soy-sauce pickle.

To not have soy-sauce pickle even though there are leeks!
Like this, it lacks the finishing touch. To obtain the last piece, I came back to the duchy capital under the cover of the night.

9-24. The Search at the Duchy Capital

Satou's here. I sometimes see wonderful urban legends where the character in tales or stories wakes up beside an unfamiliar opposite sex who's sleeping nearby, but it's never happened upon me in reality. However, it's a common spectacle in the other world....

◇

I feel my face is wrapped in soft sensations, it feels wasteful to wake up now.
Ah, bliss. However, this sensation isn't Nana's, and Lulu's aren't these big.
Don't tell me, has Aialize-san intruded?

In case of the last one, it'll be bad if I don't wake up soon, so I escape from dozing off.

Huh? I don't know this room.

Half of my view is a soft body wrapped in unbleached cotton, and the other half is reflecting unfamiliar furnitures in a narrow room. I can smell cheap alcohol mixed among the faint smell of sweat.

Right, I remember now.

"Onee-chan! It's morning."
"Wake up quick. I'm hungry~"
"Starving nano~"

I lightly wave my hand to the little children who have intruded the room.
Oops, I've made the wrong choice. I should have clung to the ceiling and activated hiding skills when the door opened.

"Wa~ Futsuna-ane has brought along a young man~"
"Mom, onee is being loose!"

"Onii-chan, are you going to make Futsuna your bride?"

The children is making noise like a beehive that's been poked.
I'm a bit worried with some of the remarks, so I check my clothes and my body just in case. Yup, it's safe. We've only slept together. Since I've been journeying together with Arisa, it feels strange to have the check become the norm.

Last night, I slipped into the duchy capital in the dead of the night, but it was so late no inn was open. I have a lot of acquaintances in the duchy capital, but it would be bad manner to suddenly visit them in the middle of the night, so, as it can't be helped, yes reluctantly so, I was walking to search for a bed at the night town, but--

Even though it was supposed to be a fun nightlife, I unexpectedly got involved in a little quarrel.

It's just an ordinary quarrel in a night town. A spell-user woman on her late 20s with slightly big breasts was being extorted by a criminal group called [Grey Bat] for her stall. That was it. They were going to sexually assault her since she didn't want to pay the fee, so I intervened as there was no way I could leave it alone. That spell-user woman was Futsuna-san.

I led the criminal group toward the patrolling guard ahead, and when they got close, I quickly handled them with [Magic Hand]. It seems that the members of the criminal group who tried to attack the guards were put into the jail. There were some who tried to escape, but since I caught their feet with [Magic Hand], every one of them seemed to have been captured.

I kept a tense distance while I was leading the criminal group, so Futsuna-san fainted immediately after the guards helped. It couldn't be helped, so I carried her to her house at the housing complex, but I encountered the prostitutes women who seem to be her acquaintances. They seemed to have just finished their works and come home.

And then, after they humorously made fun about Futsuna-san, I told them that I saved her from [Grey Bat] extortion, and Futsuna-san told them that those guys were all arrested by the guards, then the prostitutes onee-san raised cheers of joy. They seemed to be a group of good-for-nothing who

leeched on the streetwalkers.

They were originally led by a decent man, but he was seriously injured by the demon rampage at the downtown that occurred before I got to the duchy capital, so his influence decreased and the [Grey Bat] started to do as they please.

Anyway, the party to celebrate the annihilation of [Grey Bat] begun, and it became an all-night drinking bout. I couldn't get drunk, so the prostitutes onee-san who got worked up made me drink cheap liquor in large quantity while glued to me. It was absurd to even compare the liquor to the one that I drank with the black dragon, but it was tasty for some reason. It was truly a fun feast.

I'm worried with the women's finances since we drank quite a lot of liquor. It would be boorish of me if I give them money for the liquor expenses, I guess I'll put some Shiga liquor in a suitable barrel and give it to them later.

I slip out of Futsuna-san whose soft body holds my head, and get up off the bed.

My feet has stepped on some kind of soft things. Since I can hear, "Ahn", soft voice, I look down. The prostitutes onee-san who drank together with me are buried under the empty bottles of the liquor.

I apologize to Futsuna-san's mother for the drinking bout last night. I secretly used [<<Secret Field>>] magic so it should have been quiet, but I should apologize with a few words here. She forgives me while saying that it's just like usual, and also, "If you're fine with middle-aged woman who's late at getting married, please get along well with her." while laughing. U~n, she (Futsuna) can't be called a beauty, but she looks plainly cute with her make-up-less face and shoulder-length red hair, there should be some men who fall for her inside their minds.

After having the seaweed and grain soup that Futsuna-san's mother had made, I left the housing complex I had spent the night in.

◇

Now then, first I need to go to viscount Shimen's scroll workshop.
I changed my clothes in an alley, picked a horse-drawn carriage cab on its pool near the great wall, and went to the scroll workshop.

"Chevalier-sama! You've returned faster than I thought."
"Yes, I have some unreasonable things I need Natalina-san do."

I cut to the chase with Natalina-san in the drawing room of the workshop.
I came here to request them to make new magic scrolls for exterminating jellyfish and crafting things at the elf hometown. There are eight elementary magic, and four intermediate ones. In addition, I earnestly ask them to take out various [Dodge Monsters] type of nature magic of the storeroom. There is [Dodge Marine Mammal] among them, so I'm expecting it to be effective against the jellyfish.

"U~n, the two space magic among this twelve scrolls are not possible. There's no one that can use space magic this advanced. Formerly, there was someone who could, but that person had been invited to become a teacher at the royal capital academy."

Hoo, it's not like there isn't anyone huh. However, I wonder if it's alright for her to leak the scroll-making technology.

"Is it not possible to ask for that person's help?"
"That girl won't cooperate unless it interests her. She should be neglecting her teaching duty even now, she's said that she's going to make a holy sword that surpasses Gjallarhorn in her sleep."

Natalina-san is sighing grandly in appalled tone.
Fumu, a holy swords creator huh. Then I wonder if I can use the dragon powder as an exchange?

"Can I get the cooperation of that researcher if I offer this material as an exchange?"

I put a vial on the table while talking.

"This is?"

"It's dragon powder."
"Do you understand the implication?"

That reminds me, the fact that dragon powder is a material for making a holy sword is a highly classified information in Shiga kingdom. Work hard [Poker Face] skill.

"Unfortunately, I don't know the detail. A long time ago, I was told by an acquaintance that, 'If you get a hold of dragon powder, bring it to the royal capital.' When I ask for the reason, he only said that it had something to do with 'Holy swords.'"

The deception skill shiningly assists after a long absence. Common stories flash in my mind one after another.

"Tell you what, Chevalier-sama. Don't talk to such thoughtless person okay. Some dangerous people of the kingdom might set their eyes on you if you're careless."

Natalina-san is warning me so while she opens the dragon powder vial and checks the inside. This dragon powder is made from the scale fragments of Heiron the black dragon. The scale is big in itself, but the volume increases greatly when it's made into powder, I've made 120 vials from fragments that seem to form one piece (of scale). One vial should be about 10 gold coins worth if I'm not mistaken, so it's quite a fortune.
The property of dragon powder differs for the outer circumference, the surface, and the inside of the scale. The dragon powder that I've taken out is made from the fiber of the interior of the scale that makes the most quantity. Of course I didn't forget to change my name to Nanashi when I was making the dragon powder.

"The maid over there! Call gramp Jang here. Tell him, 'Come, if you want the chance to analyze high grade dragon powder'!"

The overly excited Natalina-san told the maid who had come to add tea to my cup to do an errand, and the maid got out of the room.

"Chevalier-sama! Where did you get this! No, that's not it. That's not it. Do you only have one of this? Do you have the fiber part from before it's turned

into powder?"

She's too excited, her words are collapsing.
I've gathered many broken scales, and sorted the damaged scales to be on its own, there are three of them. However, what is she going to use them?

"The fiber part is it?"
"Yeah, I've read about a man who created advanced magic scroll from a book at the royal library, that man seems to use a writing brush made from dragon's whiskers."

Whiskers huh~? Heiron the black dragon has whiskers, but I don't think that thick whisker can be used as a writing brush.

Natalina-san also knew about that.
I'm told that she and her friends went to hunt dragon's whisker at the labyrinth city 150 years ago. What a rash person. The whisker they sought seem to be from lower dragon's, but even so, it was still too thick to be used as a writing brush. I asked if they defeated the lower dragon, but she replied with a bitter smile saying that driving it away was the best they could do. Nevertheless, they still acquired a lot of scales, and it was profitable enough that the party members at that time who also worked in a magic workshop called [Ivy Mansion] could set up a base at the labyrinth city.

Back to the story, from that experience, she's been thinking that the material for the writing brush might be the fiber from the whisker after all. She shouted toward the ceiling that she was not making scrolls back then, so she ignored it. Calm down.
In fact, the elf who was the leader at that time made a high-powered living doll from the fiber taken from the scales. I want to meet that elf, I feel that we will get along well.

Looks like the chance for me to take out the dragon whisker, or rather, the dragon fiber from the storage has been lost.

"W, where is it Natalina! The best dragon powder is thisssss!

At the speed that didn't match his obese body, Jang-shi, the workshop head took the dragon powder on the table and stared at it. He's probably

checking it with his [Item Check] skill.

"Ooh! Ooooh! It's a high-grade no mistake. It's dragon powder made from the scale of a genuine dragon, an old dragon nonetheless, it's not from something like a lower dragon. Isn't this the phantom item that appeared only once at Seryuu city 40 years ago! Unununu, I don't know the creator. There's no mistake that this is made by a very skilled alchemist! Natalina!"

I thought that he was a more composed person, but he's quite an interesting one. He's fit to be Natalina-san's superior.

"Chevalier-sama, w, would you be so kind as to concede this?! You would wouldn't you!?"

Jang-shi bloodshot eyes are scary. Ah, please don't hurl your saliva.
If it's like this, I'll ask something a bit unreasonable.

"If you comply with the unreasonable request that I've told Natalina-san earlier, I will present it."
"What?! Are you sure? No, you're sure right? Do as you wish with this old woman. Yes, in exchange for this flat chest--gwowah"

Natalina-san who can't put up with the sexual harassment remarks body-blows Jang-shi. He's fainted, but Natalina-san probably held back, if she seriously hit him, there would be a wind tunnel on Jang-shi's stomach.

"In other words, if we can complete the scrolls from earlier with the shortest time right."
"Yes."

Natalina-san is laughing while having a carnivorous smile like she's before a prey.
Thanks to the effect of [Poker Face] I didn't get swallowed by her smile, and succeeded with the negotiation. Natalina-san was trying to get another vial of the dragon powder for the researcher at the royal capital.

However, I won't hesitate to make a dragon writing brush if it can really be used to make advanced level magic scrolls. I'll ask the elves if there is anyone who can make it at the elf hometown.

◇

After I've finished the business at the scroll workshop and greeted Hayuna-san and the others, I return to deal with my original purpose. I tried to search for pickles like I did with the short horns during the map search last night, but I couldn't find it. The name must be different.

I went to visit the duke castle head chef as the my remaining hope.

9-25. The Search at the Duchy Capital (2)

Satou's here. I hadn't think about it when I was in the former world, but I didn't think just how the things I usually ate were made or from what ingredients they were. It feels very real after I come to another world.

◇

"Hello, it has been a while."
"Ou, if it isn't young master Satou. Long time no see."
"It's been a long time, chevalier Pendragon-sama."

The head chef-san who welcomes me while smiling is bad with polite speech like usual. He looks fit to be someone who's wearing an armor and wielding a great sword on a battlefield, but he's one of the five people in Shiga kingdom that can make the delicate imperial dishes. Another one of them is that head chef's support, the slender young man chef.

The maid-san who's guided me to this room is waiting close to the wall with face full of expectation, today I'm not here to cook though.

As souvenirs, I take out the dragon spring liquor and brownie wine from my bag. The brownie wine isn't something that rare in the market, so I probably won't be find out. On the other hand, the dragon spring liquor is completely unknown in the market, so even if it's analyzed, they should think that it's made in a minor sake brewery.

"Are the wine and the other one both Shiga liquors?"
"I'm sorry chevalier-sama, please don't mind him."
"No, it's alright. I found some unusual liquors during my journey, so I thought that I should bring some to everyone."

Actually, in exchange for tempura jelly recipes, they taught me various things like the way to decorate vegetables, or make shaped candies. The character bento for Pochi and the others are some of the result.

I get down to business after we're done with the pleasantry.

"Red pickles huh? I don't know no soy sauced pickles, but pickled peach and salted lulu should be red, they are."
"Let's see, pickled carrots and fruits that are related to gabo are also red, but they're more like orange if I have to say."

Unfortunately, neither of them are aware of soy sauced pickles.
They're mentioning various red pickles, but I've never come across Japanese radish in the duchy capital in the first place. Due to that, I'm out of radish stock since I've been using them for the Japanese-style hamburg steak. I've also made grated radish too many times for the grilled fish dishes, so I guess it's not strange for me to run out of stock huh?

"If you know the ingredient, why don't ye' make some yerself?"
"I understand that it uses Japanese radish, and lotus root, but there's some flavoring that I'm not sure."

I think it uses salt and vinegar, but I don't remember what creates that red color at all. It's not from coloring agent right?

"There's no one who cultivate radish round here 'fter all."
"There's a legend from long ago that says orcs will come if you plant radish, though it's just a superstition. It should be cultivated around the territories of earl Kuhanou, and earl Seryuu."

It's hopeless if there's no radish.
I thanked the two, and decided to go back. The maid who was waiting near the wall looked really disappointed, but I secretly gave her one bag of baked sweets while saying, "It's a secret okay." I've been giving them to the pixies and the elves everyday, so I don't have many in hands.

◇

It'll be too conspicuous to go to the territories of earl Kuhano or Seryuu if it's not in the night, so I've decided to pay my acquaintances some visits.

I came to the airship workshop before I got out of the duke castle, and presented some brownie wine to the workshop head. This was not because I skimped the dragon spring liquor of course. Even though his red face looks like someone that can hold his liquor, he's not good with strong liquor, so I didn't give him that one. The brownie has only 10-30% alcohol degree on top of being sweet and easy to drink.

While being careful as to not make it unnatural, I ask about the way to control the aerodynamic engine, but it seems the engines that are in the duchy capital all only use fins that have identical output. He grumbled that because of that, sometimes new aerodynamic engines aren't made even after there are monstrous fish that have been subjugated. Even the second-hand aerodynamic engine that's been serviced from the other day is being keep as a spare for the engine in operation today.

"Is Satou-dono familiar with a country called Talbia."

What's with that beer-loving-like country name.

"It's a country southwest of the Parion holy country that's located past the desert of death on the western part of the kingdom, they make small airships called floating pot that a person can ride."

The workshop head moves his pen on a paper, and draws simple structure of the thing.
It looks like a hanged caterpillar falling from sea of acid. How do I say this, if we leave out the landing legs, it looks like a sake jug. There are small fins on the bottom of that pot, those fins rotate along with the pedestal, and equalize buoyancy it seems.
Shiga Kingdom seemed to have tried to imitate them, but it ended up just like it did for me in the other day; it couldn't even fly, and did serious damage instead.
It seems they had investigated that the thing might be convenient for scoutings, but concluded that the birdkin were better for it.
The workshop head isn't thinking about the floating pot, but whether the mechanism of the pot can be applied to the big airship.

"Oh right, has Satou-dono heard the thing about the prince from before?"

The workshop head-san who knew about my quarrel with the third prince told me about various news concerning him casually. The third prince seems to have retired from the holy knight with illness as an excuse, he has also lost his right to the throne, and got confined in the imperial villa at the back country that's under direct control of the royal family.

Honestly, I had forgotten the things about the prince, but I thanked the workshop head-san's kindness nonetheless.

◇

Seems like Orion-kun wouldn't like it if I visited him, so I splendidly ignored him. I'll just send him a letter of apology for not showing my face later.

First, I stopped by the mansion of the previous earl Walgock whom I'm indebted with while bringing some brownie wine and gold crafted music box that I had made together with the elves. It's a normal spring type music box, not a magic tool.

I leave without taking too much time, and head toward marquis Lloyd's mansion this time.

I've received a report from the messenger, whom I've sent earlier, that an appointment has been securely made. Since he's a busy person, I didn't know if I could meet him or not, but since it was not good to postpone the particulars about the arsonist noble from the other day, it was good that I could meet him sooner than later.

I received a passionate welcome at the mansion of earl Lloyd. To have maids lined up to welcome me in rows ahead the open door, what galge is this? was what I wanted to hear. However, please spare me from being hugged by marquis Lloyd who had waited ahead.

"I don't know how I could ever thank you sir Pendragon."

From marquis Lloyd's story, baronet Poton has voluntarily retired from

being the governor of Puta town with the pretext of being ill, and another noble from the marquis' faction has replaced his position.

Seems that the current earl Bobi and marquis Lloyd worked together to deal with the remnants of the Wings of Liberty. Unfortunately, the young noble men committed suicide by taking poison starting from the son of baronet Poton after they had been arrested.

They sure work fast, it's not even been two weeks since then.

"The duke himself has sent a written letter asking for information concerning this marquis Dasles person to Makiwa kingdom, but..."

Since he was being evasive, I waited until he talked. He hesitated to say, "It was an accident without a doubt", that the ship which the arsonist noble had ridden was attacked by large herd of monsters and sunk. Moreover, the monsters ate not only the problematic arsonist noble and his party, but even all the soldiers who had accompanied them.

I see. I should dismiss the "It was an accident" part. If I am to digest it normally, it must be that marquis Lloyd and the current earl Bobi have conspired to get rid of them. Although, I won't mind even if I have to keep silent, since the arsonist noble brought it to himself. Therefore, I only answered with, "It can't be helped since it's an accident."

I added a smile to appeal that I believed him, but marquis Lloyd's face was pale. Why? He seems to be a busy person after all, he might be tired since his worries pile up.

Marquis Lloyd proposed to give several mines and businesses to me as an apology for this incident. That's really too much, and I won't be able to handle them even if I accept, so I gently decline it.
And then, he also recommends me to become the next viceroy of Mitotogena city which is a trade port located on the great river whose viceroy is going to be replaced next year, but I decline it of course. Something like being a viceroy seems so troublesome, please give that to people who love their social positions.

Afterwards, he tries to give things like jewelries, and maidens--they're little

girls with one digit age as expected--to me, but since none fancy me, I continue to decline, and in the end, he asks if I want to become an adopted son of his faction viscounts who don't have a successor.

It appear that he was trying to give me something so that I would not speak, so I asked that if possible, I would like to borrow his treasured magic books if he had one.

I felt slightly bad when I looked at marquis Lloyd's face who looked really relieved. I don't particularly need a gift or an apology, but I'd accept it if he's glad with it.

There are a lot of people among marquis Lloyd's clan who excel at earth magic, so their archive is full of earth magic books.

It would be bad if I took the treasured books by mistake, so I picked severals with the suggestion of the old man butler's recommendation. Since the butler also has earth magic skill, it's probably the most suitable. He's picked about 10 books, and I borrow the five most interesting ones among them. I'll borrow the remaining five books when I come back to return this set. Since there was a map with the placements of the neighboring countries hanged on the archive wall, I took a photograph of it without permission.

Being here too long wasn't good, so I chose the right timing to leave after I had borrowed the books.
I only realized that I could have treated the tired marquis Lloyd with his favorite tempura for dinner after I had gotten out of his mansion.

◇

I was thinking of meeting with Sera, but she was currently training in Tenion temple.
I didn't want to be a nuisance, so I didn't approach Tenion temple, and went to the downtown. I looked for soy sauced pickles among the jeering of the stalls, but I couldn't find it.

When I went to a certain shop that was said to sell red pickles, it turned out

to be red turnip pickles. It seems nice to go with rice, but it's not it.

"Masita?"
"Masita, no?"

I was called so from below, I looked down.
Oh, the brother and sister sea lion children who got along well with Nana huh. They look around restlessly while sniffing with their noses. It's cute that they can't say 'master' properly.

"Where is Nana?"
"Nana not here?"

They shake their bodies around me while looking for Nana.
However, I don't think you'd find Nana even if you roll up my trousers' cuffs.

Nana seems to be quite attached to these two. I promised the two to bring Nana along when I come here next time, and give two bags of baked sweets that were reserved for Nana to the two. I see the two children off while they're saying thank you by nodding their heads.

"Young master, won't you buy some pickles?"
"Oo, aunty. You also have a stall open huh."

The one who's called me out is the mother of Futsuna, the spell-user, whose place I've stayed on last night. She's selling pickles made from cucumbers and gourds soaked with soy sauce and mirin. They're quite delicious, or rather, aren't these taste of soy sauced pickles? It's a bit too sour, but it should have tasted like this.

It seems that the one who's taught this recipe to Futsuna's mother is one of the prostitutes onee-san who has participated in the drinking bout last night.

She was selling normal pickles up until then, but her sales improved when she started to sell these Kuhanou pickles. She told me that her profit didn't increase much since the soy sauce and the mirin are expensive, but there weren't any customers who came even while we were talking, so there

probably are some regular customers.

Evening of that day, I earnestly implored the prostitute onee-san who has taught Kuhano pickle's recipe to Futsuna's mother. I thought it was going to be a difficult negotiation, but she immediately replied that she would teach me. She taught me an arrangement of her hometown's recipes since she was born in Kuhanou territory. Seems that It was originally a recipe for pickle of circle radish that is specialty product of Kuhanou territory. Since she murmured, "I want to eat Kuhanou-style pickle.", I would buy her some radish while I'm buying for me.

I gave her several gold coins as a thank for teaching me the recipes which made her lose her work time. Her pride seemed to have been incited by that, and I got to be flooded by the baptism of her techniques until late at night.

I left the housing complex after I had confirmed that the kiss marks have gone with [Self-Healing].

Now then, let's fly to the radish producing area--earl Kuhanou territory during the night!

9-26. Nostalgic Place

Satou's here. Rodeo machine was popular as a way to speed up diet at one time, but do people's households still use it now?　My house bought one, but it became a frame to hang laundry before even a month had passed.

◇

I leave the duchy capital under the cover of the night darkness.

After I had gained high enough altitude with Sky Drive, I accelerated in one go with [Air Cannon]. I continuously spread Flexible Shields to act as wings. In order to get lifting power, I stack several Flexible Shields to make it look like wings. The shape might be far from being optimum, but maybe thanks to me using [Air Control], MP consumption is lower than when I only use Sky Drive, and it's harder to lose my speed.

After approximately one hour, I've arrived at the grapevine mountain range near the Phantom Firefly Cavern of Oak.
It's probably faster if I go through the cavern, but I'd like to gather some oak ores for glass-making, and carbonated water during the trip over the mountain range.

The oak ore mine of the duchy itself is located two kilometers to the west of the Phantom Firefly Cavern. According to the map, around 20 kilometers to the east in the mountain, there is a place for mining oak ores. There's also a place where I can get silica a bit deeper from it, so I'll go there.

I quickly create holes by using earth magic, and harvest the raw materials to the storage. There are terribly lots of underground insects on my feet. It was good that I noticed it halfway through, and took refuge to the air. If it was Arisa who hated insects, she'd be faint with bubbles on her mouth.

Contrasting to the name of the mountain range, grapevine, far from having grapes, there is barely any fruit on this mountain. I wonder if it was the

center of grapes production during the era of the orcs?

There are phantom beasts called [Sky Deer (Amagica)] on this mountain. I ignored it since I was on the ship back then, but since I wanted to meet it once, I went to it.

This sky deer has a racial ability that's similar to Sky Drive.
Yes, those deers run in the sky.

However, it seems they ran faster on the ground as the herd with 10 deers were running on the mountain when I found it. To be running in the middle of the night like this, I wonder if my mining activity have surprised them?

The male sky deers have more imposing horns than a moose, but they look like normal deers beside that. The leader-like sky deer is about three meters tall, but other than that, it looks like the other sky deers.

I wonder if they'd fly~?
I was thinking like that while floating in the sky several hundreds meters away from the sky deer herd, but I quickly moved my body in accordance to crisis perception skill that suddenly kicked in.

The leader sky deer lunged with great speed right at that time.

Flames are blowing on the hoofs of the sky deer. If we look at its legs that aren't burned, we might think think that it wasn't hot.

That sky deer charges at me many times, but since I have the ground shrink as my trump card, I continue to avoid it for certain. Apparently, leader-kun was acting as a decoy as the sky deers that were on the ground had escaped.

After splendidly evading the sky deer for several times, I sneaked behind it by using ground shrink, and landed on its back. It was involuntary since I felt slightly mischievous.

The sky deer is jumping up and down in rage in the sky as if it's gone mad.

I had ridden on a rodeo game once, so thanks to that, or not, I managed this without much hardships. No, it might be because my horse-riding is at MAX.

Nevertheless, it seems that the sky deer always moves its head up whenever it hits the ground, maybe it's its instinct. It should do a somersault since it can fly anyway. The deer seems to think that I won't get off if it's just rampaging around, it decides to plunge into the tree groves. I wouldn't let it got hurt because of my little prank, so I put Flexible Shields in front of the sky deer to prevent it from getting hurt. When we got close to the ground, I used [Magic Hands] to pin the sky deer down.

When the sky deer had became quiet, I gave it some water to calm it down. Come to think of it, I have the [Tamer] title, should have set it.

>[Taming Skill Acquired]
>[Animal Training Skill Acquired]

>Title [Sky Deer Rider] Acquired

Now then, since I've unexpectedly bullied the sky deer, I will exterminate some monsters that look threatening to them as an apology. Beside the leader, it's probably dangerous for the herd to go against [War Mantis], and [Spider Bear].

Let's put the flexible sword that I've just acquired at the scroll workshop yesterday to use. It's a magic that use flexible shield not to defend, but to attack. I can make up to 16 blades, and extend as far as [Magic Hand] does.

I approach the war mantises and spider bears that I've marked on the map from the sky, and quickly mow them down with flexible swords from the air. I catch the defeated monsters with [Magic Hand], and put them into the storage.

There are still few war mantises left, but there's no problem even if I don't annihilate them.

I rise along the surface of the mountain range, change to level flight when I reach high altitude, and leave behind the duchy territory.

◇

When I've come at the sky of the slightly nostalgic baron Muno territory, I'll look at the state of Muno city's development, and confirm how many houses have been built on the reclaimed land of Totona and the others along the way. As expected, people look like dots at this altitude without the farseeing skill.

I was intending to just pass through it, but since the number of thief on baron Muno territory hadn't decreased much, I hunted them until dawn.

I'm in Nanashi silver mask mode this time. It's the phantom figure who has defeated the demon of Muno city.

I approach the thieves hideout from the air, and incapacitate them with [Remote Stun] from outside. I carry the the unconscious thieves with [Magic Hand] by floating them, and transport the arrested thieves in bundles to the front of Muno city.

By using earth magic, I make some stone pillars in front of Muno city, and tie the thieves with ivies. Conveniently, the guards of Muno city seem to have low morale, as they're sleeping on duty. How hopeless.

I did such roundup works repeatedly until the sky was turning white.
The safety of the highway will be quite better with this, but it looks like a new urban legend will be born. It's a good medicine for the guards who sleep like a log.

While hiding myself, I peek at Totona and the others at the reclaimed land, I'm glad that their food situation is better than I've thought. It seems Nina-san has distributed the foodstuffs from the duchy capital back then.

◇

As the result of the side trip, I got to the Kuhanou earldom as the day dawned. I fly at the course where I won't meet people on low altitude, make a landing near Nouki town, and walk toward there on foot. I get a lift on a

wagon I've encountered on the crossroad, and enter the town. When I entered the town, I used the commoner ID that I had made in Seryuu city.

I help the old man who have let me ride with him to unload his wagon as a thank.

"Huh? Is this a round radish?"
"No, this is long round radish. There won't be round radishes before the winter come."

Now that you mention it, it's slightly elliptic. Since it was just right, I bought a bagful of long round radishes.
There was a shop nearby which sold lotus roots, so I also bought a bagful of the roots there. The lotus root is unexpectedly cheaper than the radish. It seems to be cheap since the lotus root are not cultivated, and instead picked in the wild.

I asked around the people on the stalls, but none were selling Kuhanou pickles. Ever since the public order of baron Muno territory has worsened, merchants who come from the duchy territory to sell Mirin disappear, so they can't make it even if they want to.

Damn you demons, it's your guys' fault huh.

They said that the general store which had bought flavorings and pickles from long ago might still have some stock left, so I decided to look there.
It's a bit annoying to carry the groceries I've bought, so I ask the old man's permission to put it behind his stall.

"Hello."
"Ye~s, welcom~e."

Huh? Wasn't this store supposed to have an old woman attending?
The one who's keeping the store is a before-20 years old woman without make-up.

"I'd like to have some Kuhanou pickles, do you have some?"
"Ah, Kuhanou pickles is it, we've ran out of stock, but please wait a bit."

Regrettable, out of stock huh.
The onee-san clerk is calling out, "Obaa-chan", toward the store's back.

"What is it, your voice is loud."
"This customer wants to have some Kuhanou pickles."
"The store is out of stock."
"Aren't there some that Obaa-chan has pickled last month."
"Those ones used the relatively expensive mirin, so we can't sell it at the store's price."

For an instant, I thought that the two were doing a little play to raise the price, but it seems that the aunty honestly didn't want to sell it.

I said that I had visited here with some great effort, so I would buy it even if it was expensive. Although she said expensive, one potful of around 500 grams heavy was two silver coins. I tried to sample it before buying it, and even though it tasted somewhat different, it was soy-sauced pickles without a doubt. I'd buy it even if it was two gold coins.

Mission Complete.

◇

Now, then since it's going to take five days at the fastest to make the additional scrolls, I decide to go back to the elf hometown at once. I got close to the duchy capital along the way, so I put one small pot of around 100 grams of Kuhanou pickles to a small bowl and gave it to the prostitute onee-san who gave me the information.

I arrived at the house inside Boruenan tree when it was very late at night.

With the help of the recipe memo, I compounded the curry powder. It was easily completed than I thought. However, I'm not confident if yellow curry will be accepted, so I begin to experiment some arrangement if I can make curry with different color.

It keeps not becoming the color of curry I want, so I make some home-made

soy-sauced pickles and put it in the item box as a change of pace.

When I've successfully made the color of curry powder I want, I mass produce them enough for the ingredients I have in hand, and put it in the storage. Curry has many uses in itself, so it's not going to be a problem even if I make a lot.

Since my body smelled like curry, I used deodorant magic, and went to bed. I can probably sleep for about three hours from now. I fell asleep while feeling pleasantly fatigued.

9-27. Pests Extermination (4)

Satou's here. During the time when games were sold in ROM cartridges and CDs, master up (game development deadline) = development is over. Nowadays, there are works to be done for version upgrade, so there is no finish line, it's hard. It's the most troubling when a work comes for something that I've forgotten.

◇

I'm pulled from my sleep by the sensation of hair tickling my noses.
This must be Mia.

Let me sleep for a bit more.
I catch Mia while fumbling and hug her to stop her prank.

Huh~?
It's different. It's not Mia. Someone who moans "Au au" must be high elf-sama. Mia can't put out this soft feeling.

I'll likely be judged guilty like this, but my reasoning can't be restored enough to release these hands. Dozing off while enjoying the wonderful sensations and the cute voices, I return to the blissful sleep once again.

◇

"Wake up~!"
"Mwu."
"Master, it's morning. Umm, please wake up."

I wake up from the slightly deep sleep by the sensations of getting my hair and cheek pulled.

"I've conjectured that his fatigue is high. To rest please."
"It's certainly very rare for master to wake up late, he must be quite tired."

Liza and Nana are voicing their worries. It's alright, I'm only sleepy, give me another five minutes. No, please let me sleep for just another 10 minutes.

"Tired~?"
"Should I call Zena nodesu?"

What are you calling Zena-san for?

"Mwu, Aaze."
"That's right, erofu. How long are you going to enjoy it, get awayy~"
"Uu, I mean, I mean, I can't move ndamon. It can't be helped. I mean, I can't move ndamon."

For some reason, Mia and Arisa are angry to Aialize-san. Did she empty another can of sweets in secret again?

Come to think of it, Aialize-san's voice sure is close.
I slightly open my eyes, and there's the reddened face of Aialize-san before me. Wait, isn't it too close?

"Good morning."
"G, good morning."

What kind of situation is this.

There's Aialize-san on top of my body that's sleeping on bed. I can see Arisa and Mia on my view, so it's probably not in the middle of an attack.

"How long are you going to hug, get separated already~"
"Satou."

Arisa and Mia grab my hands and move it. Huh? Did I capture Aialize-san when I was half-asleep?

"Please excuse me for this."

"N, no, you were half-asleep after all, it, it can't be helped!"

Even after she's escaped from my restraint, Aialize-san can't quite get up, so I help her sit on the bed.

Arisa and Mia are holding guilty festival until after I get up. Please give some leniency since I was half-asleep.

◇

"And so, have you accomplished your objective at the duchy capital?"
"Yeah, perfectly."

I've acquired the soy-sauced pickles, and perfected the adjustment of curry powder!
For some reason, Arisa's gazes are cold.

I'd likely get told, "Seiza", if I tell her the detail about the soy-sauced pickles, so I show her a glimpse of the scrolls I've obtained from the scroll workshop.

I did contact you several times with [Telephone] magic from duchy capital didn't I. The range for this magic seems to depend on the skill level as [Telephone] from Arisa didn't reach me since it was too far.

Looks like the breakfast is pseudo-french breads.
On top of having no vanilla essence, the bread was hard so it felt lacking. I wanted to eat breads since we always eat rice lately.

"Do you like soft bread more?"
"Why don't you ask Kua? You haven't asked the way to make natural yeast?"

Oh, soft bread seems to exist.
That reminds me, we've always eaten my dishes, so we haven't tasted the local cuisines of elf hometown. I'll ask Mia's mother to teach me and Lulu some recipes next times.

◇

Lua-san who has come here after the breakfast is going to tell the result of observation on the observatory. Since they don't want to publicize the matter about jellyfish, I lead her to the parlor instead of the living room. Lua-san isn't the only who tags along, Aialize-san whose face is still burning also follows.

"--and so, the ice cage lasted for half a day, and the stone cage lasted for two days, before the jellyfish escaped from them. The cages from the space magic of Aialize-sama are going strong even now for both the intermediate and advanced ones."

Fumu, space magic barrier is powerful after all. I checked the number of elves that can use space magic cages to Lua-san, but it seems that only Aialize-san and one of the elder can use it among those who are awake. There are only about 100 people who can do that even if we count the ones sleeping.

"However, the sleeping ones won't want to be counted among it."
"Why is that? Since it's the world tree's crisis, they shouldn't complain even if we wake them up right?"
"They are people who have chosen to sleep in order not to forget their memories."

I can't quite comprehend Lua-san's word. Lua-san seems to have guessed it as she begins to talk about the detail a bit more.

It seems that elves encode old information every 1000 years.

In my vocabulary, it's probably like changing [Episodic Memory] into [Declarative Memory]. Simply put, after a millennium has passed, [Memory] is irreversibly changed into [That short word called 'Memory'] it seems. Of course the [Semantic Memory] seems to also be consolidated, but since there's no elf who does research to the point that it'll become a problem, this is omitted.

Thus, the elves who don't want to lose their memories no matter what are put to a long sleep. The place where those elves sleep look more like a cemetery than beds. It's caskets rather than cradles huh.

Of course there are also way to make the memory remain by force with magic, but the memory becomes disorderly and can't maintain its integrity, the elf who does so becomes emotionally unstable, and so there is no one who undergoes it without approval from the elders assembly.

It's difficult to live long huh.

"The seven high elves will be fine even if they wake up though. Those kids are sleeping because they 『Got tired』."

The high elves can entrust their memories to the world tree, so their memory won't be deteriorated. However, they won't be able to remember if they are not connected to the world tree, so it's not like it's all-mighty.

"Even though I've never directly met them in person, there seem to be high elves who hate every race beside elf, and some radical ones, so please think the way without waking them up if possible."
"I~guess, like Iflueze will absolutely say, 『Huhh? Pests you say? Just burn those things. Kuhahaha, it's a festival!』, and then proceeds to continuously fire 『DEL Inferno』 to make big fires."

I see, it doesn't seem to be the specialty of Biroanan clan.

Lua-san seems to pretend that Aialize-san's insider story doesn't exist, as she coughs to clear her throat, and returns to the topic.
The results about the matter that I asked the elder to inquire back then seemed to have come.

"First, they had tried investigating substances that the jellyfish hate, but they couldn't discover it. They can't find attracting substance beside mana. The jellyfish seemed to be attracted to magic tools that had been filled with MP and artificial life-forms like wisp, as they tried to reach it with their feelers when those closed in. However, to peel them off the world tree means that we need MP that exceeds the world tree, so it's realistically impossible. Those are their replies."

They can't find the way to make the jellyfish readily go huh, unfortunate. I'll carefully read the written reports regarding the jellyfish. There might something that we have overlooked after all.

"About Satou-san's plan to use cages for the jellyfish, the clans that are interested with it are not only Beriunan clan and Burainan clan which are clans that like to do research, but also Zuwakanan clan, they're going to help during the experiment and the investigation."

It seems that although it was a plan that anyone could come up, there wasn't anyone that had tried it.
Unexpectedly, someone who thought of it might not said it out loud.

This is the first time I've heard Zuwakanan clan, but they seem to be a clan that live on the same continent as Biroanan clan. I see, this must not fail huh.

"Um, and the others are."

Lua-san reports other matters while turning the report paper.

About getting obstructed by other jellyfish when a jellyfish was separated for a certain distance away, it seems that the jellyfish around the area attacked with lightning together. At that moment, the jellyfish that was being pulled away would roll up its feelers and made an electric barrier to protect itself from the lightning attack.

When the jellyfish released strong electric attack, they seemed to rob the required MP from the world tree branches, and several branches that were caught by the jellyfish seemed to wither because of it.

I'm concerned with the relapse prevention after the jellyfish have been exterminated, but Biroanan clan have already thought about it. It seems that they're having artificial life-forms made by the high-elves to go on patrols outside the world tree.

"Artificial life-form like Behemoth is it?"
"Ufufu, that's not it. Behemoth shouldn't be able to fly, Biroanan should be

using <<Create Ifrit>>, and the summoned Ifrit should be using <<Create Papillon>> to summon flame butterflies."

Ah, not Behemoth, but wisp huh. Beside Lua-san, Aialize-san has reddened up to her ears, and she's slightly trembling due to embarrassment.

Since it's cute, I'll leave her as she is.

"However, isn't the duration short?"

If I'm not mistaken, the mana on the void sky is scarce they said.

"Yes, if they can replenish the initially needed MP that's large, it can be maintained for ten days, it's going on patrols to attract the jellyfish. Of course, when battle begin, it'll quickly dry the caster's MP, so they use the ship when it's the time to exterminate the jellyfish."

I see, it's more like a bait than a light trap huh.
It seems that the discovered jellyfish are to be exterminated by the ship that departs from the observatory. They seem to call it Light Ships.

"Every world tree has eight light ships each, but Boruenan only has four left. The goblin demon lord was rampaging a little over 100.000 years ago. Heroes didn't exist yet at that time, so three light ships were destroyed before the demon lord could be defeated."

Huh? What about one other ship?

"That was given to the hero as a reward for exterminating the demon lord. I think it's still at the Saga empire even now since it's been passed on every generation."

There are four other ships that are the same type as Jules Verne huh.

"E, even if you look at me with those eyes, you can't."

Aialize-san has given a warning ahead of time.

"I, I'm resolute you know!"

Ah, it's about that huh.
I think Lua-san who's giggling knows what I have in mind, but let's not correct Aialize-san's misunderstanding here.

However, if this world tree has less ships than the other world trees, I think it'd be better if they think about the forces to hold the line of defense against the jellyfish, post-extermination.

9-28. Curry Festival

Satou's here. Do you like curry?　I think that the genuine specialty-made curry and pouch curry are both delicious in their own ways. However it was painful when my clothes smelled of curry after the lunch break that resulted in the women employees looking coldly at me.

◇

Now then, let's begin the preparation for the curry festival tonight.
I asked Lua-san in the morning to reserve one of the squares.

Large pots are lined up on the ground.

The large pot is big enough to fit a man inside, and it has eight feet on the bottom. They're not for walking of course, but for creating about 10 centimeters gap when the pot is put on the ground.
During our stay at the duchy capital, I made a lot of these pots in the underground labyrinth, they were made to be heated with the [Flame Field] magic.

"You two, please help me peel the vegetables."
"Yes."
"Understood."
"Liza, teach Nana how to do chamfering."
"Yes, please leave it to me."

I entrust Liza and Nana to peel the vegetables. I take out the chicken meat that I've left pickling since before the duchy capital out of the Item Box and pass it to Lulu.

I'd like to use chicken cutlets as the topping, but I guess the chicken meat isn't quite enough is it?

"Mia, is there anyone I can ask some chicken meat from?"
"Nn, Hiya."

Her word is few, but Hiya-shi is most likely a hunter. After Mia beat her thin breasts doing "Leave it to me" gesture, she ran accompanied by Pochi and Tama on her flanks.

Are you guys going to catch Roc bird?

The shortage of personnel for the vegetable peeling is immediately supplemented.
The researcher of hero's dishes, Nea-san leads some adult woman elves who like to cook to help. I entrust several people that Nea-san's brought, and Lulu to do the work that would take some time to finish.

Nea-san and me are going to fry the onions.
Fry it carefully.

Slowly and carefully.

Slowly and carefully.

Nea-san is cooking while frequently looking here.
It's complete when the onions have turned yellowish-brown.

I have Lulu to change place with me and mass produce it together with Nea-san. It's written in the memo that this onions give slight sweet taste to the curry, so it's quite important. I make the onions that are big enough, and some carrots to be shaped like stars and crescent moons, I just need to arrange them afterward.

I feel lonesome stares looking here from the shade of a tree. It's Arisa and Aialize-san.

This is troubling.
Letting Arisa to cook is seriously a flag for failure. In case of Aialize-san, I can't help but imagine her tripping the pot and gets splattered by the inside of the pot.

I beckon them, here here.
Arisa and Aialize-san points their finger toward themselves while having

"Me?" faces.

When I nod to that, they smile like in full bloom, and rush here hurriedly. When I think of this time, it hurts my heart.

"Ehehehe~"
"I-is there anything I can do?"

I say, "Yes", and pass baskets with candies from the duchy capital inside to them. I push thin stick candies to the mouth of the two who have received the baskets with blank faces.

Arisa seems to have noticed my intention as she crush the candy in her mouth while looking reluctant. Aialize-san doesn't seem to quite understand, she's eating the candy with slightly red face. Her expression is a bit erotic.

"Please distribute the candies to the pixies so they don't disturb us."

Ah, please don't put that "I've been betrayed!" face. With the basket hung on her arm, Arisa pulls the teary eyed Aialize-san to the square and gathers the pixies. I'm sorry Arisa. I'm leaving it to you to babysit the pixies and Aialize-san.

◇

The flame that's dancing wildly is heating the pots. When it has boiled, I relax the flame and remove the lye.
This work is really quite troublesome. I pass some ladles to Nana and Liza who were looking at it so interestedly. The two methodically scoop out the lye. Only the serious Liza and the hobbyist Nana can do such troublesome work so steadily. I'll reward the two later.

Halfway through it, some elf men who look like they're in military seemed to be attracted by Liza's serious expression, they began to take part removing the lye. You guys, why does the atmosphere becomes as if you're doing a serious match.... Since it feels like I've lost if I retort them, I leave

them alone.

Now then, once the lye have been removed, and the vegetables have been cooked, I just need put the curry powder next.

I'll leave the state of the vegetables' to Nea-san.
I'm going to prepare the garnishes at once.

I prepare many fried food as the topping together with Lulu. Whale karages and cutlets, fried prawns, wild boar cutlets, and fried white fish meat. Halfway through, I appoint Lulu as the teacher to guide the elf women the way to help.

Now then, I'll prepare the deep-fried paprikas, and pumpkins for Mia.
I only preliminary arrange these, the frying is for later.

I fry the sweet potatoes that I've thinly sliced before. I put it in a small basket, and bring it to the place where Arisa is playing Sugoroku with the pixies.

"Arisa, I've come to bring more snack."
"Uwah! It's potato chips! Is it alright? It's alright for me to eat it right?!"
"Share it with everyone."

Potato chips was among the item that I forbade during the diet back then, so I rarely ever cooked it. I've also told Lulu not to make it, so it might have already been one month I guess. I have some carbonated water that I got during the oak ores gathering, I'll try to make soda if I have some chance later.

"Okay! Popo, Lili, line up the pixies in a line! I'll distribute the wonderful snack from the hero's country you know."
"Aye aye sir, ain't it!"
"Oh you, Arisa, you're exaggerating."
"But, it smells nice～"

Potato chips seem to be popular with the pixies too. I can hear relatively angry voice of Arisa from behind. Work hard, Arisa.

I prepare sweet drink for people who are bad with bitter ones while hearing such voice from behind me. I'm just putting some Ugi sugar into cooled cow milk. The drink outward appearance become like green tea because I put this sugar which has green tea color. After the pseudo green tea latte fill three large bottles, I cool it with magic. I need to operate the magic delicately since it must not freeze over, but it's not that difficult.

◇

I put curry powder into the pot little by little, and stir it while the powder is melting, but it's not getting thick. Was the original recipe wrong?　I put some wheat flour in order to easily thicken it. This time I feel that the body is lacking. It finally feels right after I've thrown some butter.

Next, I need to lower the flame, and wait for the flavor to sip into the vegetables. I'll fry the topping one by one in the meantime.

"Prey~"
"A big catch nanodesu!"
"Praise me."

Tama, Pochi, and Mia are running while being full of mud, so I stop them before they enter the square. Five elf men with nihilistic faces are following the three from behind. Although I said men, their outward appearances are that of junior high school students, so they look like nothing but some cheeky boys. Arisa would have drooled over them.

"Thank you for your hard work."

I use life magic to clean the people who have come back from hunting. Pochi and Mia smelled strange since they were caught by some plant-type monster, so I use deodorant magic on them. It seemed to be quite hard.

There is no time to pickle the chicken meat I've obtained, so I'm going to use it for the topping instead. There are pheasants, and ducks, they look really delicious. I'd like to make the duck into kamonabe with dashi or udon, but I'll just put it on top of steamed salad this time.

The elf men who have come back from the hunt camp on a temp table at the square for the banquet, and begin to have liquor and appetizers ahead. Pochi and Tama are cunningly eating the grilled chicken at the place where the elf men are. Don't overeat okay?

"Nn."

Mia carries the potato chips basket near Arisa, and holds it out to me. Of course the inside is empty. Come to think of it, Mia and Arisa are often fighting over potato chips huh.

"It's dinner soon, so no. I promise that I'll make it as snacks tomorrow."
"Promise."

I join my little finger to Mia's little finger and do yubikiri. Aialize-san who's surrounded by the pixies seem to find yubikiri unusual as she's staring at it. Let's magnificently ignore it here.

◇

I distribute the completed curry rices. It feels like distribution center with all these people and camps.

I use the slightly long thin rice from Gururian city. It feels like rice from the specialty shop that I had eaten at before, so I'm imitating it.

"Huh? It's not yellow."
"Yes, it's too much for beginner so I changed the color. Don't worry, I've made our share to be yellow."

There are four kinds of red yellowish greeen bitter orange curry this time.

First, green curry with spinach-like vegetables. I made this one for people who like vegetables like Mia. It has normal spiciness.

Next is the red curry with quite a bit of pepper. I made it for people like the

nihilistic men and Lua-san who likes something curious. Nea-san and Lulu who tasted it end up in tears, so its spiciness seems to be uncommon. I put a lot of wolf meat I have in stock.

The yellow one is keema curry. Of course I've arranged it in Japanese-style. I put the pickled chicken meat in this. It's quite hot, although not at the red curry degree. Its yellow color is close to the primary color one, so people who associate it with curry probably won't associate it with something disgusting.

The last one is orange curry. It's actually a normal curry. This color is made by coloring agent. Needless to say, the harmless one. They're something that I originally made to distinguish potion, arranged a bit. I've put cow meat that I got from the elves-san for this one. I've made two kind of flavors, the normal spicy one and the sweet one.

Maybe because there's no prejudice against it, the orange beef curry is popular among the women. I make it so people can freely choose the fried topping that I've mass produced.

As for the small palates, there are fresh salads, boiled cabbages, mashed potatoes, vegetables sticks, leeks, and etc. The soy-sauced pickles are limited so it's exclusive for my table. I'm currently making more myself, I'll share some when it's finished.

When everyone has spread through the place, the meal begins with [Itadakimasu] sign.

Ah, curry after a long time.

"Huh? The color of master's curry is strange nanodesu."
"The color is originally like this you know."
"The stars are hidden～?"

The stars-shaped carrots, and round-cut onions inside the curry seem to be popular. Now Pochi and Tama would probably eat it without avoiding it.

"It's hot, but delicious."
"Declaring that the curry here is cute."

Liza, you're free to put the topping and all. I think it's fine even if you pile the whale karage to the point that the curry can't be seen. She's chosen the keema curry. The chicken meat seem to be the decisive factor.
Nana is greatly delighted by the extremely hot red curry, and the rabbit-shaped cut of the apple-like fruit.

"Uu, it's delicious, but I can't eat it since it's too spicy."
"Aaze, do your best."

I've been admiring Aialize-san who's eating while drinking water with her mouth opening and closing with teary eyes, but I should help her soon.

"Aialize-sama, please try this."
"It's not spicy! I can eat this one."
"That's good to hear."

I changed her curry with the sweet one. The staff is going to enjoy her curry later. There are also other people who seem to be bad with spicy curry, so I inform them about the sweet curry.

"If your mouth is still tingling, please use the drink here. It will subside the hotness a bit."
"T, thank you. ...Tasty. It's sweet and delicious."

Since she still looked painful, I presented Aialize-san with the pseudo green tea latte I had made earlier. The way she's drinking it gulp by gulp by using both her hands is cute.

It's not like I'm charmed by that image, but the [Guilty] calls somehow come from Arisa, and Mia. I forgot to distribute it to everyone. I had planned to give it to everyone in the first place, but it seemed to be bad of me to give it to Aialize-san first. Why.

I put the remaining bottle of the pseudo green tea latte on the elves table since it's bad for us to monopolize it.

"Ah, bliss. It's as delicious as Coconi curry."
"Arisa, hamburg curry nano desu!"

"Karauma~"
<TLN: Corruption of Kare=curry, Uma=yummy I guess?>

Nea-san seemed to have grilled the leftover meat into hamburg steak. That person really likes hamburg steak huh.

I look at the curry feast while nibbling the soy-sauced pickles.
I'm glad that it suits their tastes.

However, Mia. You don't know.
There are beefs in the curry you're eating. It's turned into fiber since I've simmered it in different pot, so she probably won't notice it. It shouldn't have the texture of meat either.

While having such strange narration in my head, I fondly look at Mia who's doing all her might to put the curry into her mouth.

The curry, and the topping that have been prepared for 500 people are all consumed. There are many derivate dishes that have been born this time, like Liza's [Whale Cutlets among Curry].

There weren't any women who refuse the fruit jelly dessert even after they had eaten that much. No matter how they say that it's going to another stomach, it's bad for their healths, so I'll give them some digestive medicines later.

The curry festival is over like this.

The elves who couldn't participate seemed to voice their dissatisfactions, so it had been decided that we were going to have curry festival for a while. I didn't want to have curry everyday, so I gave the curry recipe to Nea-san who was fully motivated and pushed it to her.

I wanted to help Nea-san who had been dyed with the spices fragrances, but at that time, I was busy with another matter, so I couldn't spare some hand.

9-29. The Extermination Preparation

Satou's here. I've heard a saying that says, "Diluted poison becomes medicine", but that shouldn't be the case for everything. Conversely, the "Too much medicine become poison" is mostly true. If anything, it's "Too much is as bad as too little."

◇

"Hello, Satou-san."
"Ah, Lua-san, you've come just at the right time."

I pass the five big jars containing the [Sleeping Drug] for the jellyfish to Lua-san. Since she has the same [Magic Bag <<Holding Bag>>] like I do, there's no problem even if I give her heavy luggage.

For the past 10 days here, I've been giving 3-5 types of sleeping drugs for Lua-san to test on the experiments. As of now, the one that exhibits the highest effect is the one made from the world tree sap.

"I certainly got it. Even though I know that you've probably known the results of the experiments by the [Telephone] from Aze-sama, here is the written report from Jia."

I thank Lua-san and take the bundle of papers off her.
The poison with weak effect seems to only make the jellyfish sleep for 10 minutes, but conversely, the one that's too effective makes it like they've stopped living, let alone coma, it's difficult.

Since it could likely kill people, I borrow an uninhabited workshop outside of the town and compound the drug there. It seems to be the place where Rek-shi, a spriggan, has previously used.
There seems to be a small Source nearby this mansion, so there is no need for me to supply magic power to the magic tools here to operate them, it's quite convenient in a lot of way.

It's really too convenient, I'd like to keep staying in it, but if I am too late, a [Telephone] from Arisa comes, so I can't exactly do that. Recently, Pochi and Tama participate on the telephone to make me feel guilty, it's become quite crowded. I questioned her since it shouldn't have been possible with normal Telephone, but she replied, "I worked hard to improved it" proudly.

Now then, I've passed the sleeping drugs for today, so let's do another work.

I'm currently doing four works including the making of sleeping drugs.

The first work is the making of sleeping drugs like earlier for the jellyfish matter.

Since we're lacking people who can use space magic to make cages for the jellyfish, we're going to employ ice cages, and sleeping drugs together, and is now currently testing whether it's viable to complement the lack of practitioners. We've found some sleeping drugs that are highly effective, and there are even some jellyfish that are still sleeping even now. If it's effective for 10 days, the jellyfish cages operation is going to be greenlighted at once it seems.

The second one, I'm trying to figure out how to prevent recurrence of the jellyfish.

I'm thinking about autonomous interception satellites for this. As an image, it's like a man-made base defense satellite. Since it seems to be possible to maintain Cube in the void sky due to the mana, I think this one should be usable at the high altitude. The biggest problem is maintaining the magic power. I've envisioned that it will have laser turret, and a head that operates it, making it looks like a floating golem.
The problematic thing is the power reactor after all. I'd like to use the philosopher's stone like the living dolls since I want build a system that doesn't require external operation from people as much as possible.
Actually, I have borrowed three power reactors from Sotoriya-san, but since she's emphasized "Don't break it okay", I can't experiment with it recklessly, it's hard.
Making nuclear reactor seems to be possible since we have magic, but since I don't have any document regarding it, I don't even know where to start. I'll

leave this as a problem for the future.

The third one is working with the aerodynamic engine.

I combine my knowledge as a programmer, and the controller unit of the living doll that I've gotten from Sotoriya-san's living doll blueprint.
I try various things like balancing the output of the rotation I've heard at the duchy capital the other day. There are a crane, and a big fixation nearby this mansion, so this kind of work progresses very smoothly.
I've perfectly completed making the control unit, but the work involving the aerodynamic engine isn't going well since I have no way of knowing the speed. Looks like it'll be a while before I can complete it.

As you might have probably guessed from the [Aero] part of the aerodynamic engine name, this engine can't operate in place without atmosphere. I've hit a standstill before I can even start to work on building the replica of the light ship. I'd like to know how the light ship work, but since it's god-made, there doesn't seem to be any document that's detailing it. As for the maintenances, it seems that the docks where the light ships are residing do it automatically.
The aerodynamic engine that the hero is using (on his ship) seems to have been added later. I guess it can't be helped since they have to rely on Saga empire's technology, and magicians if anything break since they can't service it at the world tree.

The fourth is expanding our equipment.

Once we leave the elf forest, the next destination is the labyrinth city.
Leaving me aside, I want to perfect the girls' equipment. It'll be troubling if the equipment are too eye-catching, so I make two types, ones for showing off, and another that are plain for everyday use.

Presently, I've completed three staffs, and the prototype of non-lethal magic sword.

Arisa's staff is luxuriously made from a branch of a thousand years old tree at Boruenan forest. I've focused on MP consumption reduction and increased magic accuracy as the main effects since we're going to have series of battles at the labyrinth. A great man once said, "It's meaningless if

it doesn't hit" after all.
I've accidentally made an identical staff for Mia when I was making one for Arisa, but let's make it a present for having journeyed with us when we are leaving Boruenan. I acted as thought she was going to go with us. I think little children should be with their parents after all.

The third one is a staff made from the world tree's branch. The staff's material had somehow mixed in during the time when I was gathering the jellyfish feelers back then. Its performance itself is impeccable, but it looks like it's made of mineral, or rather emerald, so it inevitably looks conspicuous. The color and luster are quite beautiful that I involuntarily, and impulsively added a rose decoration on its tip, and carved tangled reliefs on the main part.

Rather than becoming a treasure, it has become a thing that will be stowed away instead.

It's not good to overdo it isn't it.
I'm reflecting on it.

Now then, about the prototype magic swords, I've modded the [Shell] that Pochi and the others use. In contrast with the [Shell] that is hard and blunt, this prototype is specializing in non-lethal attack, thus it's soft. When you invoke the [Soft Shell] on this sword, a cylindrical magic field that's about as hard as foam will be generated. The recent swords can generate [Shell], but even so, their attack still can reach if they hit too hard.
I'm expecting that this [Soft Shell] sword will have stun and knockback additional effects like black jack.

Right now, I'm thinking of applying this [Soft Shell] structure for making a non-lethal shotgun for Lulu.

I also want to start working on strengthening their defensive equipment, but it's not going too well. With the defensive equipment I've made during our duchy capital stay, it should be able to handle monsters that are on later half of level 20s, but I want to increase the margin a bit more. It might be good if I recycle the explosive-proof roof of the airship that are made of the whale leather to make new armors. I'll ask Lua-san to introduce me to an expert of armor-making next time.

◇

"Young master, miss Lulu has brought you a lunch."
"T, thank you Giril."

Giril, the house fairy (Brownie) who's taking care of this mansion, normally acts like a butler toward the guestss. He seemed to have lived in the labyrinth city long ago, so I listened to various stories about it from him during the rest times.

Apparently, he has a great-grandchild living in that labyrinth city, I'd like to meet it when I've arrived at the labyrinth city. I hear that it's a young brownie of around 60 years old. That's young huh.

He's walking as if gliding, bringing the lunchbox that Lulu's passed. Since he's only about half as tall as humans, it looks as if he's carrying an extra-large size lunch box. There are sandwiches and hamburgers that can be eaten with one hand inside. They seem to be made of white breads that Ms. Kua has shared. I'm honestly happy since I've been missing normal bread.

The danger of the [Sleeping Drug] is present even here, so it's off-limits to Lulu.

I open the cover and confirm the inside.
It's a sandwich with a lot of vegetables. It's been made with attention to detail as it can be eaten with one bite.

I'm reviewing the problem earlier while putting the meal into my mouth.

"U~n, although it's possible if it's just scouting, without the philosopher's stone, it's impossible to have enough magic power to attack."

I involuntarily blurted to myself since I couldn't deal with the current situation.
I guess it's really impossible to have something like autonomous interception system~

If for example, the magic power from the philosopher's stone is 100A, then the golem needs 30A to maintain its altitude, and about 45A for the passive and active scouting.
From it, it's hard to regard whether maintaining altitude is low cost, or the scouting is too costly.

And, laser is the only one that can attack several hundreds kilometers away without getting dampened by the space. Laser needs little magic power compared to other attack magic, but nevertheless, it needs 1000A. The cost seems to be stupid high, but this much output is needed to defeat a jellyfish. It needs another 50A magic power if the laser is used as aiming sight.

I've become able to make battery-like things with the help of the elf technology, but for outputting 1A, I need to make it two liter big PET bottle size. Even if I make it at the degree where it can shoot one laser, it'll be many times bigger than I planned. The material for this battery seems made from the world tree sap, so it can be made no matter how many.

If I connect a cable to the battery, it's likely that the jellyfish would extend its feeler to absorb the magic power from it. It's wonderful that I don't have to make superfluous magic circuit to prevent counter-current since it already has a mechanism to do that from the beginning.

I completed one prototype of the autonomous interception golem [Scarecrow] until the sun set that day.
I've only implemented the function to maintain its altitude on this prototype. I think everything is a steady accumulation of experiments.

◇

I wave my hand to Giril that's on the entrance of the mansion, and head back to the tree house.

Ahead of the main gate of this mansion, there is a Fairy Ring that connects to the underground town and the town above tree. Therefore, it's really easy to move around.

"'elcome~""Nano desu!"

It seemed that Pochi and the others had just finished their training, the two who were sprawling on the ground jumped up.

"Welcome back, master."
"Master, delighted that you've returned safely."

Nana and Liza who were tidying up the wooden swords and the mock spears, stopped their work and went to greet me. Nana is sweating a lot, though Liza isn't so much.

These fours are being taught by the elf martial artists.

Everyone is clearing the Attraction too fast that Shagnig the leprechaun can't keep up with the service and maintenance, so they're going to rest for 4-5 days every time they clear it. Thus, the beastkin girls who are free are training under the elf martial artist who are also free to kill time.

Pochi is being taught swordsmanship by Ms. Poltomea. She's the same type of Pochi who puts all her might in single blow. On the seat during the banquet, she's said that it's fun to find the critical timing to do the single blow while enduring the opponent's attacks with her shield. It's fun to drink with this person since she brings various liquors from the elf hometown, and talks about her vast knowledges of those liquors. Her only flaw is her habit to start undressing when she's drunk.

Shishitouya-shi is instructing Tama the way of two swords. He's a user of Daisho Katana. He said that they're given to him by the king of Shiga kingdom several hundreds years ago. Both don't have inscriptions, but they're on the same level as the Torate I have.

Liza is taught by Gulgapoya-shi for the spiral spear, and Yuseku-shi for handling short spear. Yuseku-shi is not an elf, but a spriggan. Both of them are experts who are able to use magic edge.

Especially Yuseki-shi, even though I've never been taught directly, he's my teacher in my mind. Once, he was showing the next level of magic edge on

the short spear as the final goal of Liza's training. It seems to be a skill called Magic Edge Cannon (Mana Blast). Since I wasn't able to see his magic power flow until he fired the Mana Blast, I still can't successfully do this technique even now.
I tried to ask him to teach me once, but he said tp me, "Steal it", with a terribly delightful face. I will learn it before I go out of the elf hometown to live up to his expectation.

And finally, Nana also has two teachers. The magic swordsman Ms Gimasarua, and the dwarf shield-user, Keriul-shi. Keriul-shi seems to be the uncle of Zajir-shi of the dwarf hometown, he's been living as a guest in the elf hometown since three years ago.

These teachers seem to eat dinner at the square that's been doing curry festival like before without getting tired of it. Even though it's been 10 days since that festival, looks like they're still continuing it even now. Nowadays, the curry is of normal color without any colorations.

I pray that Nea-san won't be dyed yellow.

9-30. Pests Extermination Operation

Satou's here. It's said that lights are usually followed by shadows. Even though it looks fine at a glance, out that some things have been overlooked. I think one should do a review during their free time.

◇

"Ah, Satou-san! It's about the Scarecrow Mk.7 that you've entrusted to us, it's broken through the jellyfish's detection, and succeeded until it gave the [Currently Watching] signal."

Lua-san reports so to me who have just come back from the duchy capital. I was involved with a small disturbance in Puta town so I was slightly late returning back. It's not because I was playing at the store of a beautiful onee-san, nope.

I tested the Scarecrows up to the third revision myself, but Lua-san suggested that it would probably better to leave it to Jia-san who would be the one using it in the future, so the plan changed. Above all, the experiment had always relied most on Jia-san's magic, so there was no substantial change even if it was left to her.

The shape of the Scarecrow Mk.7 is like a beach ball that's stacked with swimming rings. The swim rings part is the magic power storage vessels (battery), and the beach ball is the main body. The main body is inserted with a philoshoper's stone as its core that acts as the power reactor, the surplus magic power from the stone is then deposited into the battery. The accumulated magic power is going to be used to transmit signal when it finds an enemy, and for changing its course.
The jellyfish detection seems to be enough by having the scarecrows and the alarms that have been put on top of the above town by Jia-san and the others to work in conjunction. The elves who are good at long-range attack magic are going to be the ones who will annihilate the enemies.

I receive the file that contains the detailed result, and head toward the tree house together.

"Master, welcome back nanodesu!"

Over there, Pochi is literally flying.

"'elcome~ look look~?"

Tama is also doing somersaults like she's dancing.
The two are wearing fairies clothes like the ones from fairy tales. With wings like the pixies', they fly around. Since I can feel magic power flowing on the wings, they're probably magic tools, or elf flight magic that are put on them. Pochi's wings are transparent like a dragonfly's, and Tama's wings are like the yellow butterfly's.

The two fly to beside me, take poses, and emit [Praise me] auras, so I dutifully praise them.

"You two are really cute. You look just like faeries."
"Ehehe~"
"I'm happy nodesu!"

Since Pochi emits [Praise me more] aura, I praise her more until I'm writhing. Of course, for Tama too.

The two who are satisfied fly before me, and hold out their hands, inviting me to fly together.

I guess I might as well treat myself to some sky stroll.

I rise with Sky Drive while taking the two hands. Since Lua-san has refused before I go up, the three of us are dancing in the sky.

"Who put you on these cute clothes?"
"Arisa~"
"Arisa made it nodesu."

Arisa is the one who made it huh, they're certainly different from the elves'

native dress. I'll make some short staffs, one with a star decoration on its tip for Pochi, and one with a crescent moon decoration for Tama next time. But Tama likes cute things, maybe I should make her staff heart-shaped instead?

"Aze put her magic on us nodesu."
"Aze is great~"
"Eh~, have you properly thanked her?"
"Aye!"
"Yes, nanodesu!"

I'll make a pudding a la mode for Aialize-san as a thank for entertaining these two. She looked really envious when I made one for Mia back then, she must be going to be happy.

"Your very own cute fairy, Arisa-chan, appear!"
"Appear."

While saying some half-asleep things, Arisa and Mia fly out of the tree house.

Unlike Pochi and Tama, these two are wearing see-through celestial robes-like clothes that are erotic cute. Although it'll be a different story if it's Nana or Aialize-san, I don't feel the H with these two. Of course their important places are hidden since they're properly wearing underwear.

"How is it? Doesn't it feel like you're losing to your passion tonight?"
"It doesn't."

We've been taking bath together everyday, what are you saying now for just seeing you half-naked. Since it's bad for the children, I poke Arisa's forehead to keep her silent.

With Arisa and Mia joined in, we dance in the sky for a short while. The elves seem to be captivated by it, a lone tune plays, then another, and then, the fun music performance begins. Even though everyone is doing it impromptu, it's mixing really well together.

I lift aproned Lulu and Nana who were looking enviously from the balcony

with [Magic Hand], and let them participate in the sky dance. I ask Liza who's hiding behind a pillar with my eyes whether she wants to participate, but she slightly puts her hands in front of her face while shaking her head, so I overlook it out of mercy. Come to think of it, Liza is bad with the sky isn't she.

I catch a glimpse of the exhausted Aialize-san leaning her body on a giant chick cushion in the living room of the tree house. It must be because she's lost to Mia and the others' [Request] to put flight magic on several people, even though she's been continuously using magic to capture the jellyfish everyday. Rather than pudding, I'll bring her some energy drink during my visit to her.

◇

"Aze-sama, it's terrible. Beriunan clan seems to have carried out the plan."
"Fugo!"

Hey now, high elf-sama, I think you shouldn't let out such sound since you're maiden. While Lua-san is wiping the bits of pudding that Aialize-san was eating until just now, Aialize-san asks the elf-san who's intruded again. What's this person's name again? Oh right, she's Roa-san, Jia-san's big sister if I'm not mistaken.

"And the result?!"
"It seems to be a success. There is no vacancy. There's only one injured person who touched the world tree because he was flustered and suffered a burn."

Good, it's a success.
However, according to the plan, this Boruenan village should have been the first to perform the extermination plan so we can follow-up if there's anything wrong with the plan. Did some arrangement change?

"thev becom the intial scrifce, so isnt good."

Arisa is talking some unknown words while chewing the garnish peach

from the pudding a la mode. Good grief, so ill-mannered.

"Arisa, don't talk when you still have something in your mouth."

Liza gives her a warning faster than me, but--

"You have to properly savor the taste, don't talk. Otherwise, it's a sacrilege against the delicious meal."

--the point of the warning seems to differ a bit.

Per Liza's warning, Arisa talks after she's chewed her food.

"They've become the initial sacrifice, so isn't it good. With this, don't that mean the secret operation will be safely done?"

I have talked the matter about the jellyfish up to the things allowed by Aialize-san to Arisa and Nana. Of course, since I wasn't allowed to talk about the role of the world tree and the impact if the plan failed, I didn't talk to them about it.
Although, since Arisa has learned various theories about ether from the elf elder-san together with me, and read a lot of books that she's got from the elves as thanks for the food, I feel that she's found out about it on her own.

"There is no change to our plan."
"I understand. As planned let everyone beside the observer to take some rests for today, and tomorrow."

Right when Aialize-san's stopped her words that sounds like it's come from a different person, Roa-san runs toward the Fairy Ring with overflowing vigor just like when she entered the room. What an energetic person.

◇

500-strong elves have gathered in the observatory area. Everyone is a veteran whose level is more than 30. They had been continuously working to put the jellyfish to sleep and capture them in ice cages for ten days,

alternating in three turns.

They will be divided into three groups; one group is taking the jellyfish outside the world tree with the four light ships, another group is dragging the jellyfish with spirit magic with Aialize-san as the chief, and the last group is riding a golem that looks like a tank with many legs to launch the jellyfish beyond the void sky using wind magic and nature magic.

I'm on the bench since if the elves can't exterminate the pests on their own, it will be troubling if they're suffering from jellyfish problem again in several hundreds years.

Of course, I'm standing by in the command room where Jia-san is, for if anything happens.

"Now, Boruenan children! The jellyfish cage operation has started! Let's do it carefully and happily!"

Aialize-san declares the start of the operation to the elves in the void sky by using [Mass Telephone]. It seems the instruction from the control tower is performed through communication magic tools. The elves working in the void sky are carrying communication devices that are as small as a mobile phone. It seems to be many times more advanced than even the com tool I've obtained from the hero Hayato.

With movements so slow it might irritate you, they begin moving the ice cages with the jellyfish inside to outside of the world tree little by little.
It seems that they didn't cut the jellyfish's feelers when they captured them in the ice cages, the feelers tangle with the world tree when the cages are lifted, breaking several branches.

I can see twinkling lights like they're from fragment of glasses, or rather, torn frost from where I am.

What a waste.
Having mentality of the poor, I couldn't overlook the world tree branches that were falling from the gravity. When I come to, I have already used sky drive and ground shrink to gather the ones that can be saved into my storage.

However, in the end, this slightly shameful behavior ends up saving many elves' life.

The quiet void sky becomes noisy slightly after this.

9-31. Pests Extermination Operation (2)

Satou's here. I once saw an old movie where the characters became small and went on an adventure inside human body during an old movie festival. I thought that it was absurd, but I could feel the diversity of people's imagination to come up with something that I couldn't think of.

◇

It's dangerous if I don't control the speed when I'm moving in the void sky using sky drive. Even though there's gravity, the air resistance is near zero, so it's possible to move at several times the speed of sound even without acceleration from magic. It's dangerous not to think about braking when I start to accelerate. I'd like to have the advanced magic, [<<Inertia Control>>], and [<<Inertia Cancel>>]

When my movement using Sky Drive exceeded the speed of sound, I obtained a skill, and two titles.

>[Flash Drive Skill Acquired]

>Title [Fast One] Acquired
>Title [Conqueror of the Heavens] Acquired

The Flash Drive skill I've acquired this time is a combination of Sky Drive and Ground Shrink as a set. I realized that after I had activated the skill. Since I can move like I'm flowing unlike when I use the two skills as a set, this might be more convenient. With Sky Drive and Ground Shrink, I can only move linearly no matter what. Against an opponent of the Wild Boar King class, there's danger of being read ahead, so I think this is good. Yes, it's not a waste of skill points.

While varnishing it on my own mind, I use the Flash Drive at once to collect the broken world tree branches that are falling.

The removal of the jellyfish seems to be going smoothly.
It'll be nice if there's nothing happen--oops--if Arisa was here, she'd say.

『That's a flag you know?』

At the same time as when that hallucination hits my ears, my crisis perception give me some slight warnings. There are two places it reacts to. I accelerate toward the nearest place.

『All hands, abandon your post!　Everyone, evacuate to the observatory deck.』

I can hear Aialize-san using [Mass Telephone] to send emergency signal to the elves who are executing the plan. If I'm not mistaken, it's the maximum priority evacuation order for when fatal failure occurs.

The elves abandon each cage that they're handling and move toward the observatory. The light ship comes to the slow tank, and picks only the crews.

The jellyfish that have been in [Sleeping] condition up until just now are starting to slowly but surely change to [Frenzy] condition.

There are two places that experience the change. Both are the places where my crisis perception reacted a while ago.

『I repeat, all hands, abandon your post!　Everyone, evacuate to the observatory deck.』

Aialize-san's thought trembles.
It's probably because of the place I'm going where the elves aren't evacuating. Troubling thing. [Protect your life] order should be required shouldn't it.

『Kiya, Doa!　Leave the golem tank and hurry withdraw.』

Ah, those two huh. They're Sotorineya-san's teachers who cherish the golem tank that's on the brink of becoming a scrap like it's their own child.

I've also consulted them various things during the making of the scarecrows.
I know that they cherish that junk tank, but to not follow the evacuation order like this.

『Sa, no, sir Pendragon!　You have to escape too. Don't overestimate your own strength!　Even dragons would be burned by the attack of the world tree!』

When I was shelving myself, a precise named order from Aialize-san came. She shouldn't have forced herself to use my house name. Calling me by my name would have been fine. Or rather, please call my name.

There are spherical lightnings on the several hundreds meters area around the round golem where Kiya and Doa are riding.

Wonder if this'll work.

"You big ginseng tree!　Is it branch, or is it root, make it clear!"

I slap my thought to the nearest branch by using [Telephone].
It would appear that this provocation is working.

Purple lightning extends out of the spherical lightning, and goes to me like a living thing.
Of course it's not because of the provocation. Since I've heard from Aialize-san that the world tree uses lightning to attack, I put use of the new magic, [Lightning Rod], and ward the lightning.

It's quite high-performance even though it's just an intermediate magic. The giant dark gray pillar that the [Lightning Rod] has produced splendidly stop the extra-large lightning that looks as if it can make you return to the past 10 times.

I check the exterior of the stranded golem tank. It seems that three among six of its leg on one side can't move. I quickly go down beside it with the Flash Drive, remove the broken parts of the world tree branches that obstruct it, and put the power tubes that got torn apart into the storage.

After finishing the repair that takes as long as making an instant ramen, the world tree prepares its second attack.

There are seven thunderbolts coming this time.
When I evade it as my magic couldn't, the largish branch behind me is carbonized, and breaks. That's bad, if I carelessly evade, the world tree will become the victim.

Protecting the world tree from the attack of the world tree feels somehow unproductive.

◇

I've understood the cause of the jellyfish's frenzies.

There are around 30 jellyfish larvae in the branch several hundreds meter ahead. They look like oval balloons. They're as big as human torso, and brightly emit pale green light.

The jellyfish inside the cages are flickering to match the waves of the lights that emit from the larvae. Come think of it, it's said that, "They plant the eggs into the world tree" isn't it.

I reuse the net that the thieves used to catch the knights back then, and capture the jellyfish larvae with it. I use the net since [Magic Hands] are busy picking the broken parts. I throw the larvae that have been captured on the net to the void sky.

The self-defense lightning generated by the world tree mercilessly turns the jellyfish larvae into cinders. Of course, the world tree was aiming for me who was on a straight line from the larvae.

The jellyfish have changed from [Frenzy] to [Rage].
So that abnormal status also exist huh.

『The two have escaped, please come back fast!　If you don't, I'll go there!』

My ears hurt from the evacuation orders that Aialize-san has entreated since awhile ago.
I'm sorry for her, but let me do as I please here. The ice cages seem like they'll break if I leave the jellyfish alone now. It'll be fine if they get back to their normal conditions, but I have a hunch that they would start rampaging.

『I beg you, please come backk.』

I'm sorry, Aialize-san.

I invoke the [Kaleidoscope] and [Survey Laser] magic I've obtained from the duchy capital scroll workshop together.

The Kaleidoscope magic is named by Arisa. This magic generates several mirrors that changes the convergence rate of light and reflect it. I can arbitrary control these mirrors after they've been created just like remote arrows.

This Survey Laser is the result of my experiment to create laser pointers. Of course it has no power to kill even if I shoot it with all my might. It's an ECO design that doesn't deplete magic power even if it's radiated for a long time.

The Survey Lasers that are harmless according to my AR are reflected by the Kaleidoscope, and diffused while leaving trails in the void sky.

The ice cages seem to have come to their limits early. The sleeping drugs seem to be still effective as the movements of the jellyfish are dull, they extend their feelers toward me like crawling in the void sky.

『Mou, stupid Satou.... I'll tell Mia and Arisa.』

Aialize-san's crying voice sure is also cute.
While thinking how to follow-up her, my consciousness is concentrated toward the Survey Lasers.

Alright, I've affixed the last line.

I clear off the Survey Laser, and fire [Laser]. Of course, I'm not converging the 120 lasers like I was doing against the great monstrous fish. That's going to be overkill. Before that, the excessive power of the converged laser would probably break the kaleidoscope anyway.

The 120 lasers become 10.000 when they pass through Kaleidoscope.

Countless light penetrate the void sky, shooting through only the jellyfish and pass through the gaps between the world tree branches, disappearing.

The miscalculation is regarding the ice cages. The locations where the laser penetrate it evaporate, and strange accelerations are happening. I can't let the ice cages be destroyed by the lasers. If that happens, hot steam will violate the world tree branches.

I go around the void sky with Flash Drive, and collect the ice cages into my storage. Some largish branches were broken when the ice cages crashed, but please overlook this much damage.

In the first place, it would have been simple if the request was for me to do the extermination. Yet, the request was for [The way for the elves to exterminate them], so the scale became large. Based on this failure, we should add about the removal of the eggs in the extermination manual.

The telephone from Aialize-san had stopped before I knew it, so I decided to prioritize the clean-up.

While I continue to use the lightning rods to ward the world tree lightning attacks like usual, I capture the jellyfish larvae on the other place. I felt that the larvae can be used against the jellyfish, but since it seemed so heinous, I passed on it. I gave a silent prayer to the larvae that had been roasted by the lightning, and moved to do the next work.

◇

I have completely destroyed about 70 points where the jellyfish colonies have laid their eggs. Of course I used the map search to discover their

locations. Even though there wasn't even one when I last visited the void sky 10 days ago, just when did they lay their eggs. I should have searched again before the operation began.

Since there were some eggs that had slipped into a branch, I used [Magic Hand] to pick them out after confirming its location with [Through Eye] magic. Please forgive me for breaking the barks during that time. I didn't think [Saps GET] at all, nope. The sap that I got during that time became an item called [Contaminated Sap].

The world tree is made to think that the jellyfish is a part of it probably due to the poison produced by the jellyfish eggs. Since there were eggs that were deep inside, I decided to break the branches and went inside to destroy it. When I slipped into the branches, the world tree ceased its lightning attacks. The lightning is probably exclusive for external enemies.

The inside of the world tree branches is filled with earthen pipes-like things for water. The mana thickens as I get closer to the trunk. I cut my way through it while avoiding battles as much as possible against the self-defense antibody that acts typical of white blood cells, and devoted myself to destroy the jellyfish eggs.

◇

"Satou's reaction has disappeared."
"That's terrible huh."

I greet so to Aialize-san who's sunk down on the floor, looking at the ceiling.

"Mou, what are you so carefree about! He's saved the world tree you know!? Why are you speaking like that!"

Her angry face is beautiful too.
I tell Aialize-san who's unusually full of anger, "I'm home."

Her blank expression is quite nice too.

Since I had gone quite deep into the trunk, it was troublesome to go back the normal way, so I came back with [Return] magic that I had just made at the duchy capital. Looks like that was the reason her tracking lost track of me. Since I felt like I was being watched, I think that it was a magic similar to [Clairvoyance].

"Welcome home."

Aialize-san mutters, overcame with surprise.

"Welcome home."

Why, are you saying it twice?

"Welcome home, Satou."

I hug back Aialize-san who's clung on my neck. Arisa would have said, "Guilty", if she saw this.

"I'm home, Aze."

I replied so while lovingly stroked the hair of the sobbing high elf-sama.

9-32. Victory Celebration Party

Satou's here. I had only ever seen the parade of triumphal return when an Olympic athlete from my town came back bringing a gold medal. The player I saw at that time looked slightly embarrassed yet very proud.

◇

"Umm, you two, isn't it about time."

Lua-san reservedly calls us. Aialize-san seems to notice that we're in public after she hears her. I've noticed that since awhile ago, but since it was such a wonderful scene, I enjoyed it until it was stopped.

"I-it's not, it's not like that!"

Aialize-san pulls away from me in panic, and begins to make an excuse to Lua-san and the surrounding elves. I mix in with the surrounding elves, and enjoy the panicking Aialize-san.

"It's not huh."
"It's, it's not, but, that's not it."

I reply her slightly lonely, and Aialize-san starts to explains in fluster. While I'm admiring her "au au"-ing with her eyes going round and round, I tell Jia-san and the others the reason for the jellyfish rampage and the way to cope with it.

"Then, those eggs are the cause that makes the world tree mis-recognize the jellyfish as its part aren't they."
"I have no proof, but the probability of that is high."

I inform them that the failure this time was caused by the larvae which hatched from the eggs and turned the jellyfish from [Sleeping] to [Frenzy] condition, and when the larvae were massacred, the jellyfish became

[Raged].
Furthermore, I pass the jellyfish egg that I've put in a bottle to Jia-san. I secured some since I thought that it would be needed for research.

It seems that the PR elder-san will replace the job of Aialize-san, who's fainted, to tell the other clans about this.

The elves who are here had agreed to tell the same story, that "The hero Nanashi beat the jellyfish." Actually, the silver masked Nanashi version was included in the plan, they easily acknowledged that heroes were eccentric. It's convenient, but now I'm curious just what did Daisaku-shi wear.

Unfortunately, the jellyfish remains don't have any magic core. My work of collecting the jellyfish remains along with the cages was in vain. It might be natural since they are not monsters but [Mysterious Creatures]. The EXP that I've got from the jellyfish are fewer than from monsters. I obtained less EXP from 10.000 jellyfish than what I got from seven whales.

◇

We, who have returned to the ground, join the party that the elves who are house-sitting are preparing. Since the place where the curry festival was held wouldn't be able to fit it, they had opened the meadow block in the underground town for it.

I've changed to ceremonial clothes, and participate in the triumphal return parade with the elves.

I'm outfitted with a holy armor that looks hero-like per the request of Lua-san.
Rather than hero-like, this holy armor seems to be an equipment left behind by Daisaku-shi. Even thought it was obviously too big, it changed to become a perfect fit when I wore it. I questioned for nearly one hour about the mechanism for it, but since Lua-san who passed the equipments to me didn't know, I put it off for later.

A lot of pixies are sprinkling flower while looking cheerful from above us

who are parading.

I go with Aialize-san and the other on a temporary stage that's been set on the center of the venue while basked in cheers. Aialize-san and her four attendants are wearing miko attires like when I meet them for the first time.

"Children of Boruenan! We have safely exterminated the pests which have polluted the world tree for long--"

Aialize-san reports the result with clear voice to the people who have gathered on the venue. Even though she seems weak with this kind of thing, I wonder if she's fine since they're like her family?

"--He is the hero of human, Nanashi! Please give him applause!"

My introduction was over while I was admiring her face from the side. Slightly late, I wave my hand toward the elves.

Before long, Aialize-san's speech is finished, and the stage is handed over to the bands to start the party. There are people dancing on the center of the venue, and people assaulting the food stalls on the circumferences, everyone is doing what they like each.

I use quickdress to change back to the usual Satou from hero Nanashi. I returned the hero's attires to Lua-san.

I pick a fruit water goblet from the beverages served by the living doll, and wet my mouth a little. While carrying the goblet on one hand, I passed through the crowd toward Pochi and the others.

I got in touch with Arisa using [Telephone] when I had returned to the ground. It seems they're putting some stalls, Lulu with a crepes stall, and Liza with a grilled frog meat corner. The frog meat that Liza is exhibiting are from frogs the size of piglets. They're common amphibians, not monsters. The beastkin and Nana went on a hunt with miss Poltomea leading them yesterday.

Heavy drinkers are crowding Liza's stall, while Lulu's stall is crowded with

the pixies and women who like sweets. The elves are happily chatting and playing music while waiting. They are patient, or rather, they're very tolerant against [Waiting].

"Master, here~"
"Master nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama who have found me come out between the legs of the elves and come to pick me. The two are wearing frilly maid uniforms. I join hands with the two and go to the stall while navigating through the elves.

Looks like Mia has come to help, she's wearing mini skirt maid uniforms, matching with Arisa. Nana and the older group are wearing long skirt maid uniforms. I think it's better if it's reversed. Apparently, my taste and Arisa's differ for this one.

"Welcome back~ I won't do such inelegant thing like asking if you didn't overdo it, but you're not hurt anywhere right?"
"I'm back, I don't have any injury."

Arisa is worried about me while taking a pose to show off her cute clothes. It would have been good if she finished there, but since she muttered, "I'll be sure to inspect for any scars during the bathing tonight", it was spoiled.

Lulu and Nana are making the crepes. Arisa and Mia are taking orders and handing out the crepes in front of the stall. The gluttonous pixies seem to be trying to snatch some of the crepes, but Nana catches them and forcibly put them on her cleavage when they get close, so they're not getting it. How enviable. I want to snatch crepes too.

Lulu said, "It's special" to me, and made a small crepes on the edge of the iron plate for me. I feel bad for the elves who are waiting their turns, but since I'm slightly hungry, I thankfully accept it.

There's a tatami-wide wire net spread on Liza's stall for grilling the frog meat with the charcoal that miss Poltomea has supplied from somewhere. Good smell like from grilled chicken meat adrift. Liza uses a pair of long tongs to give the finished one to the customers while watching the heat level. How do I say this, her expression is too serious.

"Yo, Satou. Don't you have some dragon spring liquor from the other day?"
"I do, here you go."

Miss Poltomea's language is rough despite her cute western doll-like face. I stopped by the black dragon, Heiron's place, when I was going to the get the scrolls on the duchy capital, so I acquired some dragon spring liquor. I received it after I shared some of the Brownie Wine barrels I had a lot with the black dragon.

"Oh, nice smell. I'd like to get along with dragons just fer' this liquor."
"Poa, do it moderately okay."

Miss Poltomea's said some strange thing, maybe she wants to drink other liquor for a bit. Her elf friend who has started to pour the dragon spring liquor to an extra-large goblet holds her back. He's also a drinker, so half of his warning must be for her not to decrease his share of liquor.

"Savor the taste a bit more Poa. It's a blasphemy to wash down the meat with the liquor."
"I'm savoring it properly okay, Liza is fussy."

I distribute some human liquor and the dragon spring liquor to several tables that have the drinking bout started while listening to such magistrate-like exhibit from behind. This isn't because of miss Poltomea's words, but I'm slightly expecting the start with the black dragon with liquor as the impetus.

When I've returned from distributing the liquor, the frog meat have all been used up, so I take out 50 kilograms of whale meat. I cut some moderately big slice of meat, and put it on the meat place beside Liza.

"Liza~ another three servings of frog grills~?"
"Liza, another additional orders nanodesu!"

Tama and Pochi who have taken some orders announce it to Liza. When they're announcing the orders, their mouths are opening and closing, demanding for some grilled meat from Liza.

Liza seemed to be aware of it too, she had prepared two small slices of meat on small plates when she saw Pochi and Tama came back from the crowds. She catch the meat with the tongs and throw it into the mouths of the two.

"Freshly grilled~"
"Hot, hot, nanodesu!"

Liza smiles fondly seeing the two like that. At the same time, her hands quickly put some meat onto the plates like they're different creatures, and hand over the next portion of the orders to Pochi and Tama. There are more meat on the plates than the ordered, they must be for Pochi and Tama to secretly eat. Pochi and Tama who have received the plates ran happily to the customers.

I present the grilled meat that I've received earlier to the mouth of Liza who's busy for her to eat. Liza eats the grilled meat from the skewers like she's pecking while looking slightly embarrassed.

Lulu and the others who have ran out of fresh cream close their stall, and come to help Liza.

There's the figure of Aialize-san who has secured the last crepes behind the stall. The pixies are flying while protesting above her head, saying "Aze, one bite.", "Aze, monopolizing is unfair.", but she's not listening to those voices, and nibbles on her crepes bite by bite while covering it with both her hands. She's like Mia who likes fresh cream. The figure of Aialize-san who's smeared in fresh cream appeared in an instant in my mind, but I erase that out. Calm down Satou.

I catch Arisa and Mia who have ran from behind Aialize-san. Lulu and Nana have gone to take lunch boxes that they have ordered from the wives network ahead of time.

"Kya."

I turn my head toward the short scream behind me, looks like Aialize-san's crepes has fallen to the ground. I think there is no need to have that despaired look on your face.

"Uu, it was the last one."
"A~a, I don't~ kno~w."
"It was the punishment for monopolizing~"
"Aze, regrettable."

She's on the verge of crying from the merciless words of the pixies. I was moved by her state, and inadvertently spoiled her.

"I will make some for you again tomorrow, so please don't be too down."
"Is it true? Will you promise me?"
"Yes."

I gently nod to the high elf-sama who looks up while tilting her head.
She presented her left hand's pinky to me, and I was going to present mine, but our fingers never joined.

Arisa and Mia take my hands from both side, and drag me to the table where Lulu and the other have spread the catering food.

Aialize-san looks at her little finger lonely while tilting her head. I won't break my promise to make you crepes even without that look on your face you know.

◇

Ten days later, Arisa and the others have finished clearing the last Attraction, and we're going to leave the elf hometown.

9-33. Parting with Boruenan Forest

Satou's here. The day when I survived on Calorie Bars from the work's pressure is a distant memories. Making a meal with good nutritional balance is difficult isn't it.

◇

"Satou, taste strange?"

Mia eats the hamburg steak with a puzzled look.

"It's delicious~you know?" "You're being rude to hamburg-sensei nanodesu!"

Tama and Pochi are covering for the hamburg steak. Their use of forks, and tongues to wipe the sauce might be the result of Lulu's and Liza's educations.

Mia's hamburg steak today is just plain tofu hamburg. Lulu and I are also eating one, but I don't think there's anything wrong with it, it's quite satisfactory.

"Does it not suit your taste? Try to eat the one on this plate."

I take out the hamburg steak on the plate I've made for second helpings left on the warming magic tool, and exchange it with Mia's. I've made the plate color different to easily identify them.

"Nn, delicious."

Mia slices one small bit and puts it on her mouth, then she nods satisfyingly and begins to nibble on it. The tofu hamburg that Mia's left behind is shared and eaten by Pochi and Tama. They push vegetable garnish beside the potatoes to Mia.

I guess I should announce it soon.
I wait for Mia to finish her hamburg steak before telling her the truth.

"Mia, I have something I need to tell you."
"Nn."

I talk to Mia with serious face, but for some reason, she's closed her eyes and pushed out her lips. I think she's been too poisoned by Arisa. I put the preface, "It's about the hamburg steak" to dispel her misunderstanding and continue the talk. She looks really dissatisfied for some reason.

"Mia, the hamburg steak that you just ate earlier had meat in it."

Rather, more than half of it was red meat with the fat taken out.
As I thought, she looks like Pochi when she ate the fish hamburg back then, as though she's been betrayed exaggeratedly.

"Guilty."
"Un, I'm sorry. Furthermore, the first hamburg steak that Mia ate didn't contain meat."
"Mwuu."

Mia looks like she's conflicted about something, let's do the last push.

"Mia, which hamburg steak you're going to pick for the second helping?"
"Mumwu, this."

Mia points at the hamburg steak with meat inside.
Looks like she still can't eat normal meat-only hamburg steak, but I'd like to think that her aversion has been decreased for a bit.

While looking like she relaly doesn't like it, she pushed back the hamburg steak full of meat soup that Pochi had presented.

I guess it's impossible to be so sudden huh.

◇

The Scarecrows are taking off into the void sky from the light ship that's hanging on the observatory.
The Scarecrows that have been rolled-out now are only half of the intended number. Since Beriunan and Burainan clans, whom we have sent the Scarecrow blueprint, have improved it, the later half of the Scarecrows are going to have improved enemy search ability. I entrust Sotorineya-san and her workshop to create the remaining Scarecrows.

During these 10 days, the jellyfish have been successfully eliminated from five wold trees.

Beriunan, the clan which had done the jellyfish extermination first, did so in order to be ahead of their rival, Burainan clan. Sure enough, the jellyfish eggs seemed to have remained in the world tree of Beriunan clan. They could prevent the second damage due to our information that were conveyed later, they expressed their gratitude for that.
It seems that there were also eggs that remained in the world tree of Biroanan clan which was destroyed by fire before.

As thanks for the achievement this time, the clans of Bareonan, Zantanan, and Dawosanan have decided to bestow one light ship to Boreanan clan. The elder asked me if I want one, but since it seemed too much for me, I declined after thoroughly hesitating. Let's come and borrow it if I ever need it.

"Hey, Satou. Are you leaving the forest after Arisa and the others finish the Spriggan's training ground today?"
"Yes, that's the plan."

In a rare occasion, Lua-san isn't here today.
Aialize-san, who's sitting on the chair beside me, asked while putting her face on her knee that she's grasped, I answered her clearly.

"Won't you go with me, Aze."

I invite her to the journey with slightly trembling voice. Even though there's 100% chance of defeat, I cannot pull back here. I see Aialize-san's face brightly gleaming for an instant, I'd like to think it's not my imagination.

"I'm sorry."

Aialize-san muttered so, and buried her face on her knees, so I couldn't see her expression.

◇

I perform the last check on the airship in order to deceive my broken heart. This ship looks exactly like the light ship. It seems that there was a movement to create their own light ship among the elves 300 hundreds years ago, the frame that was made at that time was given to me. There are a large quantity of frames stored in the storage block inside the world tree.

It's a small 30 meters class ship, but the loading capacity is abnormally big. Which isn't surprising as the quarter and the cargo areas are expanded with space magic. It seems that the philosopher's stone is used to maintain these expansions.
It's also been equipped with eight double inversion disks type aerodynamic engines. Four cylinders are loaded as propellers. They're simple devices that only compress air and blow it behind. All the installed machineries are optimized for low noise.

As expected, it doesn't have the function to hide in dimensions.

In order for it to not be conspicuous at night, it's been coated it with jet black coating, unlike the hero's Jules Verne. To increase its stealthiness, the radio wave absorption, no, the magic power absorption coating has been used. I'm slightly interested as to why they past elves need to develop this technology.

It has one power reactor for power, like the living doll. Of course it's not only for starting the aerodynamic engine. It can finally fly after I put 30 batteries that are made from crystallized world tree saps, charged with magic power to their most.

It goes without saying, the power that actually moves the ship is me. The power engine is reserved for illumination inside the ship, searching for

enemies, and emergency landing if anything happens to me.

I was going to name the ship, False Light Ship Mk.I, but since the people on the surrounding objected it, the ship is still nameless.

There are two more vehicles.

A wooden sailing boat with a lower powered aerodynamic engine, and a small box-shaped carriage with a self-propulsion engine. Either one looks like a normal sailing boat, and a box-shaped carriage. The sailing boat has feet equipped for landing on land. It's also been made to not sink the ship when it fails on the water.

I've decided to leave the two old horses that I've bought in Seryuu city, and the hornless beast at Boruenan forest. The hornless beast is pregnant, congratulation. I'm surprised that the unicorns work fast.

◇

"Then, Mia, get along well with your parents okay."
"Nn, Satou."

Mia unwraps the hair that hides her forehead with both hear hands, and presses me to kiss there. Kissing the forehead as a farewell for her is alright, I guess.

I lightly kiss it like it's touching or not.
Everyone must be going to make me kiss them later.

"My, you've done it Mia. Quite the schemer."
"Mumu, agreed."

She triumphantly shows a victory sign toward her parents behind.

"Going together."

Yes?

"Going together."

After repeating it twice, Mia talks in long sentences that she rarely ever does.

"Satou of Shiga Kingdom, I am happy that you've accepted the engagement ceremony. Misanalia Borueanan vows that she will become one of your wing until death do us apart."

Did I perhaps, have been had?

"My, how wonderful. Satou-san, please make Mia happy okay."
"Protect her."

Looks like I've been had. According to Mia's mother, from the elves' perspective, kissing forehead means proposing for marriage, and if the receiver kisses the other's forehead, it means that the proposal is accepted. That explains why she's always said [Fiance].

I tried to tell Mia's parents that I didn't know such custom, but since they were Mia's accomplices, they plugged their ears, and went, no no.

Huh? Does that mean that I had proposed to Aialize-san during our first meeting? I might understand why she reacted until she became emotionally unstable.

Aialize-san who's come to see us off behind Mia's parent is pouting like it's not amusing. If you show me that face, I'll visit often until we reach the labyrinth city you know?

◇

The Dryad that Mia's father has called opens the Alf Road that connects to near the hidden village of the mermaids on the southern tip of Boruenan forest.

It's a bit hot there.
I can see the sailing boat that has been put in the inlet beforehand.

"Now, then, this is a farewell. I'll drop by again later."
"Come back anytime. Boruenan family will always welcome you everytime."

I take the opportunity to shake hand with Aialize-san during the confusion, but there's no 'guilty' reactions for just this occasion.

With the elders permission, I have left the carved plank as a landmark for [Return] magic in the tree house of Boruenan forest. I'm not sure if the distance is reachable, but if it's not, I can just use Flash Drive and acceleration magic to fly here.

"There's something strange nanodesu."
"Strange smell~?"

It's probably the first time they've smelled the seashore. Pochi and Tama are pinning their noses. Arisa teaches the two that it's the smell of salt.
Looks like the temperature is high around there, let's swim in the sea once.

I carry everyone and the horses with [Magic Hand] to the sailing boat.

When I was going to carry Mia, I confirmed with her again if she wanted to remain with her parents, but she said [I'm going] and forced me to hug her.
I carry Mia with Sky Drive to the deck of the sailing boat.
Everyone whom I have put to the deck with [Magic Hand] earlier are all booing, looks like the follow-up later will be difficult.

While waving our hands to the people who see us off, I open the folded sail with [Magic Hand]. I invoke [Air Control] to blow wind on the boat's sail, and the boat is departing.

The side trip is over.

We're going to advance along the west coast, disembark at the trade city, Tartumina, southwest of the royal capital, and head toward the labyrinth city.

Intermission: The Misfortune of Puta Town [First Part]

"Kena! I've found the trace. This animal trail must be the one goblins use."
"Alright, good job Gadi. I'll treat you to a lot of ale when we come back."
"Tsk, you stingy. Get me better liquor will ya."

Gadi picks up a branch and stabs it on some fallen leaves, but I don't see where the trace is at all.

"Hey, Gadi. Where's the trace."
"You have knotholes for eyes? It's a goblin dung there see?"

Gadi poked me, but she also properly told me. I didn't need to have my head grabbed and pointed to the trace though...

Close, it's too close!

The dung will stick to my face!

It's hidden well behind the fallen leaves. How is she even able to find this hard to find location.
Crap, Kena doesn't look amused.

"Stop playing around, let's go quickly."
"Alright."
"Uy~"
"Okay, wait for me."

I hurriedly pick up the luggage that have been thrown on the ground, and shoulder them. There are strings for hanging luggage on my right artificial arm, so my left arm is free. Having one of my hand usable while walking on a slope like this is really useful. I'm not losing my balance and rolling down the slope like before.

◇

"Lower your head more."
"Ouch, tell me before you hit me."

Pomi who's hiding with me hits me on my head. Pomi is quick to use her hands.
We're currently preparing a surprise attack on the goblins that we've finally found. Looks like they're making a stronghold inside a cave in the mountain. The two goblins that are guarding the entrance are chewing some kind of raw meat.

Kena who's moving from the other side has given a signal.

Pomi and Gadi use short bows to attack the two goblins outside the cave. The arrow released by Pomi pierced the goblin's mouth, killing it in one blow. However, Gadi's arrow was slightly off the course, and hit its arm without defeating it. Pomi shoots another arrow in a hurry, but it's slightly too late.

"Gugyorau, guru, geroraa"

Damn, the surprise attack's failed.
Pomi's arrow hit the goblin slightly after it shouted. It's a single strike to the temple. Pomi's bow skill is amazing like always.

The goblin's shout has stopped, but the inside of the cave has become noisy. Kena and Bahana cut the bushes, and give the signal to attack in front of the cave, we also break out of the bushes to assault.
Goblins that are rushing out of the cave fall victim to Kena's and Bahana's short spears. Both of them kill the goblins in one blow. The other goblins are attacking the two, but they use the chance when the goblins are startled from their friends' deaths and kick them to open some distance.

I also deal wth the goblin's attack while hiding myself behind the shield attached on my artificial arm. My weapon isn't as long as the two's, so if I don't block it each time, it'll be a simultaneous killing.

I cut the goblin's thigh that I can see from the gap on the small shield with the keepsake sword which has broken tip. Usually, it only gives a small wound, then I finish the opponent after they've been weakened, but it's a bit different this time.

Slash.

While seemingly hearing such sound, my sword easily cut to the middle of the goblin's thigh. What? With this sharpness.

"Kon! Don't stop moving!"

The goblin that's fallen from Gadi's kick jumps from the ground toward me. Moreover, it's attacking from the side where I've just swung my sword. The correct answer should be to push the goblin in front of me and use the recoil to escape behind, but it's impossible.

This powerless me is barely able to retain my physical strength.

If I had power like Kena and the others, I could kick well, but if I raise my foot now, the shield will be pushed and the goblin will pin me down.

In the end, the goblin fangs pierced my side while I was thinking round and round. I screamed by reflex. I remembered the acute pain when I was bitten before.

The pain doesn't come no matter how long I wait. The goblin that has bitten my side opens its mouth big trying to chew my body.

"Kon, elbow it with your arm with the sword!"

I strike the goblin's head in accordance to Kena's advice before I can think. The goblin that's surprisingly easy to shake off is then killed by Pomi who has rushed over with her short sword.

"Thanks, Pomi."
"It's fine already, just concentrate."
"Okay!"

I slash the goblin that's clawing my shield, and finish it off. I usually need to slash for more than 10 times before I can defeat one, but now I've defeated it in just three slashes.

"Alright, Gadi, watch for other goblins coming out of the cave. Bahana and me will hunt the goblins that are coming to the entrance of the cave. Pomi and Kon are to cut the smoking green wood--oops, Kon, you've been bitten by the goblin right, heal it first."

Huh? Come to think of it, it doesn't hurt.
The mantle I've got from noble-sama has been dirtied by the white drool of the goblin, but there's no hole on it. There also isn't even trace of goblin's fangs on the white armor which has protected my side.

"I'm gonna bandage you, take off your armor."
"About that, I'm not hurt, Pomi."
"Huuh? That can't be right? That goblin bit with all its might didn't it!"

Pomi rolls up the mantle violently. She consented after she checked that there was no blood flowing from my side. The line of sights from the other tree gather from that exchange.

"Hey, Kena. This kon boy really isn't hurt."
"I thought that it was just a normal wolf leather mantle, but there's something smoothly stitched between the leather. Seems that this protected him from the goblin's fangs."
"Hey, stop stretching the mantle."

It'll be expensive to ask someone to fix this.

◇

I'm gathering the branches that Pomi has cut with a hatchet into a bundle the size of my arm. There's a lot of fallen insects due to Pomi recklessly cutting the branches. I'd welcome it if they're the round caterpillars, but rhinoceros beetles have shell that's hard to remove, and not really delicious, I don't like it.

When we've finished gathering the green woods, we go back to where Kena and the others are.
Kena cuts the thin smoking stick that she's bough from the alchemist in just the right length, and stab it on the gathered green woods. Finally, she soaks it with a little bit of oil, and ignite it with a tinderbox.

Yellow smoke begins to appear together with the fire.

Ueeh, it stinks.
Additionally, my eyes are drizzling.

Pomi who has received the bundle from Kena, throws it into the cave.
Five goblins appear one after another from the cave, chased by the smoke.

I desperately swing my sword to the goblins that have come out.

"Kena, the smoke is coming out over there."
"Tsk, there's another exit huh. Gadi, go with Bahana to the other exit."
"Eeh~, my share will decrease."
"We're going to equally share this batch, so stop complaining and go."
"Aye yo~"

Gadi quickly rushed to the place where the smoke comes out, and Bahana went after her after a long delay.

◇

We hunted total 21 goblins from that cave. I only defeated three goblins. I don't have any injury unlike before, but my sword didn't quite reach the target, so it took time to beat them. I want to become skillful like Kena and the others fast.

Huh?

"What's wrong, Kon."
"Un, something is glittering on the mountain over there."

"Where?"

Gadi sharply noticed me who had stopped moving involuntarily from the light on the mountain. There's no more light from the place I point my finger at.

"It really glittered."
"Ah, you did well to find it. That's probably a reflection of the sunlight from a speartip."
"Is it other magic hunters? We had told the boss that we were going to attack on this mountain, and there shouldn't have been anyone that came here for 2-3 days."
"Maybe some people are chasing goblins from the opposite side of the mountain?"

It'll be bad if we scramble for monsters from other magic hunter group. If it's Gouts group, they will surround us and take the magic cores that we have gotten just now.

"The one beyond that mountain is the twin mountain. There is no magic hunter who will recklessly go the mountain where the Hydra appears. If there were people with such backbones, they would have gone to the labyrinth city to become explorers long ago.

If I'm not mistaken, hydra is a legendary monster that appears in old tale, or against heroes and the knights.

However, that means, who was there?

◇

"Who is it?"

Kena points her spear tip to a bushes.

"It's me, me. Don't shoot the arrow."

A big rabbitkin man with one eye, along with five beastmen from various races.

"What, it's just Orudo huh. Aren't you guys going to the mountain on the north?"
"Yeah, that was the objective, but...."

Kena presses Orudo who's hesitating to say it. Kena is arrogant like always.

"Katabane said that there was a strange group on the twin mountain, so he surveyed it, but apparently, that strange group is heading to Puta town. These guys have families there, so we decide to go back at once."

Hee, beastmen think of their families after all.

"Oy, you sure 'bout it?"
"Yeah, there's no mistake."
"Oy oy, stop them."

Katabane, who is a flightless birdkin with feathers only on one of his side, points at the glittering place from earlier, and utters something to his companions.

"You guys, I'm talking with Kena here. Save the racket for later."
"Boss. It's not about that. Katabane said that there was a hydra among that group."
"Haa? Is that group running from a hydra or something?"
"Kena, that's not it. No one can get away from a hydra in the mountain."

Err, please talk more clearly.
I look around for someone that can teach me about it. My eyes meet Pomi's. Unfortunately, Pomi doesn't seem to know about it too.

"In other words, that huh. Some people who keep a hydra like some pet are heading toward Puta town."
"Seems to be it."
"Eeh! That's terrible."

I finally understand Orudo's talk. Even though I'm just surprised for a bit,

Gadi hits my head. Fufuhn, it doesn't hurt thanks to the helmet from noble-sama. As if she's heard that words in my mind, Gadi pinch my mouth on both side from behind and pull it.

Iuaires.

Intermission: The Misfortune of Puta Town [Latter Part]

"What's happened, Kena. You've got yourselves quite a bit more members huh."
"These guys are just extras. Rather than that, I have something to report."

We've arrived at the town, and Kena tells the abnormal situation in the mountains to the gatekeeper.
I stealthily tried to enter the town during this chance, but another gatekeeper easily caught, and pinned me down on the ground. I can't slip out even though he's just putting his foot on my back.

This is the first time I'm entering the town in half a month, please be kinder.
I reluctantly pay the tax to enter to town with the pretty stripped stones that I've found on the mountain's streamlet. These stones can only be found in the mountain so it's worth some cash. Even so, a small bagful of it is only worth two copper coins, so Gadi and the others made fun of me.

"If you're going to pay in kind anyway, go get some animals instead."
"I've said it before right. I can't catch animals without a bow and traps."
"Can't you just sling some stones like Katabane?"
"That's harder than it looks you know. I tried to practice it before, but I couldn't hit the target no matter what."
"Fuh~n, it looks so easy though."
"It really is."

While sweeping the dust off my breastplate, I'm talking some nonsense with the young gatekeeper.

"Gadi, I'm gonna go to the governor's place, so I'll leave communicating with the boss to you."
"Alright."

Kena and Orudo are going together with the old gatekeeper to the governor's mansion. The young gatekeeper is shutting the main gate as

instructed by the old gatekeeper. I'm also helping him for some reason.

"Let me get in free next time."
"You fool, this is a duty. Duty. You don't want the town to be overran by monsters right?"
"Of course I don't."

I feel like I've been coaxed somehow.
The other magic hunters haven't been here for a long time. They must be enjoying the Buri town for half a month.

◇

"Yo, what are you doing shutting the gate in broad daylight like this."

When I was sinking down on the ground while leaning my back on the gate after I closed it, I could hear the voice of a carefree old man.

I look up and see a middle-aged old man saying something to the young gatekeeper.

Beside him, there's a handsome man who's wearing glasses and knight-like clothes with a long pole that looks like it's for laundry, and another one is a past-20s years old aunty who's wearing a robe with a staff.

The middle-aged old man is carrying a great sword on his back.
Maybe they're explorers?

"Actually, a hydra has appeared in the mountains--"
"Ho, a hydra you said?! That sure is delicious."
"Wait, you, hadn't you got stomach pain for one week back then. You haven't learned anything have you."
"Kyura is here this time, it's fine it's fine."
"I don't wanna. The fool who's still going to eat it despite knowing that it's poisonous should just suffer."

What are these people saying?

Are they going to eat Hydra? Eh? They said it's poisonous?

"That boy over there. This guy tends to badly forget his level. A hydra is an opponent for a group of armed forces, don't think that you can fight it even by mistake."

I nod to the handsome man.

"Excuse me. Fumu, this is quite wonderful."
"Hmm? Let see. Isn't this just normal wolves materials--oy, this shell is."
"Yeah, I think it's either from a Soldier Beetle, or an Assault Beetle, but I've never seen one that's so splendidly made like this. Moreover, it uses a whole beetle for the breastplate part, very luxurious."
"Hey, Yasaku, and also Tan, leave it at that. The boy is confused."

I'm happy that they're praising my breastplate, but please don't draw closer.

"Was it made in this town?"
"Yup, that's right."
"Then, can you introduce us to that armor craftsman?"
"I'm sorry, that's impossible."
"Is it an eccentric craftsman? I'll give you some reward if you introduce us."

By reward does he mean money?　U~n. I want to introduce them, but it's impossible.

"I'm sorry, that person is not in this town anymore."
"I see, that's unfortunate. There's barely any merchant who deals with monster materials in the duchy capital. We're looking for someone that can repair our armors which have been damaged during the martial art tournament."

Eh~, is that rare. Armors made from monster materials are light and durable, so I thought that it was common in the duchy capital. The noble who gave me this armor also said that it was cheap.

◇

Several days later, the hydra appeared. There are two of them.
Around the hydras, there are around 100 beastmen who are wearing strange cloth masks that are drawn with strange patterns. That crowd was divided, and some men wearing white and riding lizard horses (Raptors) appeared. These two seem to be humans.

"...■■■ Monster Check."

Oh, it's magic. The handsome man seems to use magic to investigate the hydras that have shown up their bodies in the forest.

"Their levels are 29 and 28. They're slightly stronger than the ones in the labyrinth. I tried to check on those white masked people too, but I couldn't see it. Those masks seem to be magic tools that inhibit appraisal."
"Which one do you think is the monster tamer?"
"It's probably the short person who's hiding on the back of those hydras."

I've slipped among the explorers, crowding in the watchtower on top of the gate. I'm acting as the liaison--as the reserve, between this people and the guard."

『Foolish people, we're going to release you from the tyranny of Shiga Kingdom!　We are the Wings of Liberty. The one that will lead you to the true liberty!』

I can hear the loud voice of the masked person. I don't know what's he talking about since he's using some difficult words. Maybe he's saying they're surrendering?

"Yasaku-dono, the governor has permitted us to attack. The archers unit will begin the attack with yours as the signal."
"Ou, leave it to me."

Yasaku is chanting something and then, a black hole appears in front of my eyes. What's this?
Ooh, he took out a bow with some sinister engravings and stacks of arrows from it.

"What's wrong boy. Is this your first time seeing Item Box?　Then, touch it

once. People who are carrying explorer's gene and have touched the item box are going to obtain their own (item box) someday."

I timidly push my hand into the Item Box, and pull it back. There's no sensation, but I fear that the black hole will eat my hand.

"Yasaku, if you don't shoot soon, I'll do the first hit okay?"
"Baro, leave that to the explorer party leader. <<Disturb>> Blue Magic Bow."

The bow and arrow are glowing red as if answering Yasaku. It's called blue magic even though it's red?
The red arrow kills the monster tamer near the hydra.

"Fufuhn, that's what happen when your magic defense got cut."
"Really, that bow is really suited to be magician killer."

Following it, the archers of Puta town defense force release their arrows all at once. The opponents seem to defend against the arrows by hiding behind trees. The arrows also hit the hydra, but it looks like its skin repelled it. Ah, it's mad. It's coming here.

"Hey, isn't it better if the hydra runs amok in the enemy forces?"
"What a coincidence, I'm also of the same opinion."
"Hey you two, please don't talk so carefree, do something about it. It's coming over here."

I involuntarily complained to the two who are being carefree. I thought that I was going to be hit since it was cheeky, but the two laughed it off.

When the hydra is on the halfway point between the city gate and the forest, it suddenly opens its mouth and spits a fireball. I reflexively hide behind the rampart. I can feel the hot air above me, it burns a house upon impact.

Uwah, that house has just been completed last month.

The sociable handsome friend of Yasaku, and the robe aunty have finished their chanting.

"...■■■■ Javelin."
"...■■■ <<Lightning Storm>>"

Many light spears and loud lightning storm that hurt my ears violate the hydras. The hydras are screaming like they're going mad, how pitiful.

『Curse you, Duke!　Have you heard our plan and sent some skilled people for it!』

The white masked person on the enemy's side is shouting something.
Half of the enemies charge ahead with the signal from the white masked people. Looks like they're monkeykin judging from the way they run.

"Hey, are we the duke's subordinates?"
"That's a nice misunderstanding."
"We're here by chance after all. Isn't it cute, by chance?"

I wonder why are they this carefree?　Are all explorers like these?
The lightning magic seems to make the hydra skin becomes brittle as the defense force's arrows can pierce it normally now. It's going to be defeated soon.

The masked monkeykins are being shot to death one after another before they can reach the wall.
When I look closer, it seems several of them are hiding behind their companions.

『Demon lord-sama! We will offer you once again here! Our liberty with your majesty!』

"What? They're demon lord worshipers huh?"
"Looks like it. How troubling."
"I hate those kind of fanatics. Can I burn them all?"
"Wait, Sheriona. We won't know their background if we don't catch that leader."
"How annoying."

"Hey, this is bad."

The body of the beastman who have arrived on the wall are swelling and warping. I pull Yasaku's sleeves beside me to tell him.

"Geh, the heck is that?"

The people around Yasaku have begun chanting. Yasaku also puts away the bow, and take out a big shield.

The monkeykin that had became three times bigger reached the top of the wall by just jumping lightly. It's not a monkeykin isn't it? I mean, it has a mouth with a lot of fangs on its stomach.

Ah, my body has frozen, I can't move. The fang comes close to my face. Breath that smells like from a beast drifts to me.

"Yasaku the explorer, coming!"

From the side, Yasaku thrusts himself with his shield, and drops the mouth stomach monkey (monster) to the ground below together with him. However, both are sturdy. Even though they had fallen from this height, they took some distance away like nothing happened.

"...■■■ Physical Reinforcement Over (Hard Boost)"
"...■■■■■ Lightning Bolt"

Lightning bolt hits the mouth stomach monkey along with blinding light and deafening sound. Handsome-san nimbly moves to the blind spot of the mouth stomach monkey and cuts it. Both are too fast, my eyes can't follow it.

"...■■■■ Divine Wall"

Light wall appears around Yasaku and the others.

"It's fine now. It's alright even if it's hit with a big magic."

The aunty magician who has already chanting since a while ago, lightly nods.

"...■■■ Thunder Storm"
"Uwaa, Barou, are you going to turn us to cinders too."
"Yasaku, you're too slow to get away."

Lightning storm that's far more amazing than the one used against the hydra awhile ago blows violently. Yasaku and Tan are saying something below, but I can't hear it.

"I'm taking this chance, Whirlwind Blade."

The great sword glows red and carve many wounds on the mouth stomach monkey.

"You're too soft. Sharp Edge."

From the opposite side of Yasaku, Tan continuously stabs with a light long sword.
It seems that they're going to defeat it soon. Explorers are amazing after all. They're unparalleled compared to me or Kena, or even Orudo--there are people this strong huh.

My out-of-place excitement is erased by several screams that are raised from the sides of the rampart.

There, several mouth stomach monkeys are routing the guards and the magic hunters.

『Be awed! Our trump card!　Taste the overwhelming violence that even we cannot control!　This is exactly demons!　Ah, your majesty demon lord!　The world of demons will begin once again on this land.』

"Demon?! This is bad."
"Really bad isn't it. Yasaku, Tan, let's escape quickly."
"Right, monsters are one thing, but demons are bad."
"Why? Aren't you just about to defeat them."

Yasaku and his friends are going to escape as soon as they heard about the demons. Even though they're the only people that can fight it head-on.

"Demons, you see, are clever. A weak magician and priest can only do this much."

The aunty magician takes out another staff that's different from what's she's been using until now, and sticks it out toward the mouth stomach monkey. Firebolt comes out of it, exploding the mouth stomach monkey. The mouth stomach monkey that have fallen to the ground doesn't seem to be damaged at all.

"We can handle one of them, but only hero can do something with this many."
"Look out."

Gueh.
A mouth stomach monkey that has jumped over the wall and descended, tramples me. The pain from the gatekeeper trampling me can't be compared to this weight. I muster my consciousness that's almost gone, and stabs between the fangs of the stomach mouth monkey with an arrow I've grasped. The mouth stomach monkey looks like it doesn't feel anything even thought I've stabbed it many time.

The magicians and the aunty seem like they're trying to save me, but it seems they can't use magic because I'm in the way.

I wonder what is that.
I saw the shadow of a floating person when I was forced to face up. Purple hair?

『<<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais』

Several swords are sprinkling down from that figure. It's beautiful.
That sword arbitrarily moves like a creature and slashes the mouth stomach monkey (demon) that has trampled me. The mouth stomach monkey is cut right in half with just one slash.

When I crawled out of the mouth stomach monkey, the battles inside and outside the rampart were over.

"It's the swords of heaven."
"It's the Ancestor King Yamato-sama."
"Yamato-sama, hooray!"
"Glory to the Ancestor King Yamato-sama!"

Everyone unanimously calls Yamato-sama name.
I don't know whether the person flying in the sky is really Yamato-sama. However, I was able to shout "Thank you" with all my might, before that person flew away.

I thought that Gadi and Bahana had died, but it seems they've gotten off with just bone fractures. Kena and Pomi seem to get off with just scratches.

I've only gotten bruised. Yasaki and the others call it a miracle. Maybe it's thank to the armor I've gotten from noble-sama. I'll thank him once again the next time we meet.

SS: Muno City Anecdote

"Ni, Nina-sama, there are a group of carriages carrying a letter from chevalier Pendragon-sama on the castle gate, what should we do."
"『A group』 of carriages? Where is that letter?"
"Here it is."

The sealing wax on the letter is certainly that of Satou-dono.
I tell Yuyurina to make the carriages wait on the courtyard, and tear off the sealing wax.

What? Inventory list huh?

Large quantity of foods, which makes me doubt my eyes, are written there.
I move my feet to the terrace and look down, I understand that this list, at least quantity-wise, isn't a lie, looking at the parked carriages.

"Good grief, thanks to this the people won't starve, but just how much do those cost. It'll be troublesome to calculate the total sum of our debt."

I pass the list to Misona, the civil official who has come in place of Yuyurina, for her to check if it matches the commodities on the carriages. This girl is inflexible as she's very suited only with this kind of work.

◇

I couldn't believe the story about that man I had heard from the merchants.

He exterminated the demon that had attacked Gugurian city? It's not like I don't believe it since it was a lower demon, but I have never heard anyone defeating it without any victim. Karina-sama seems to have also fought with him, that girl is really. We know that he's quite excellent, so just get him quickly won't she.

More than that, the personal connections that he's built in the duchy capital is quite frightening. It seems he's bought the smoked food this time for cheap from earl Houen, but just how did he obtain the favor of that hard to please earl.
Even for Orion-sama, if he keeps being unsteady, Satou-dono will likely reverse their master and servant relationship. Thankfully, Satou-dono doesn't have ambition to rise in dominion.

With these many food, I guess we can distribute them to the villages for a bit. Let's give meal for the slave labors who are working on the town and cultivating new land for their payments instead, I guess I'll have Misona and Yuyurina work hard to hammer out the details.

◇

However, it seems that I've misread that man.

After that day, three more carriage groups of the same scales arrived.
That was already quite enough in itself, but I was shocked with the content of the letter that Karina-sama had brought from Satou-dono.

It was written that several workshops had accepted to send exchange students to Muno city. Even though it usually needs extraordinary hardships to make them agree to it since they don't want to spread their technologies.
Good grief, even though he's declined the [Special Liaison Chief] position, he's actually doing it--no, he's done something far bigger than I've expected.

While savoring the pastry called [Muno Roll] that Gelt the head-chef has brought, I'm racking my brain as to how are we going to reward these achievements.

We have neither money nor treasures. We've already given him peerage. It should be appropriate to make him into a chevalier from a honorary chevalier, but that man didn't have interest to it. Raising his peerage more than this would need a recommendation from his majesty the king. And, there's also women huh.

Even baron-sama has a second wife after all.
That man probably won't refuse if he can marry a young girl.

Shall I make that village girl called Totona to be an adopted daughter of Baron-sama.
It's painful that there's a possibility for that jest to happen.

"Good grief, I should think hard in the more proper direction about this."

I can't help but grumble like that while hearing yells that come from sir Zotor and Karina-sama's fight outside.

If only I was 20 years younger.
I take a deep breath while thinking such foolish thing.

It's insufferable to have my worries increase as the management of the territory improves you know.

Intermission: At Baron Muno Territory

◇Baron Castle - The Baron's Private Room◇

"Baron-sama, sir Zotor, and Hauto-dono have come."
"Okay, let them in."
"Excuse me."

The two people who have been invited into the baron room are bewildered. That's because, even though he's a sociable master, he seems to have no interest in military, and gives directives to them via consul Nina.

In addition to that, there are two swords on the work desk of the Baron. Zotor can feel unknown power from those swords that are covered in simple sheaths.

"Sir Zotor, will you pull that sword."
"Yes."

Zotor replies with short acceptance word, and pulls the sword. Hauto that's been summoned together with him waits behind him without saying a word. Even though the baron is the father of his lover, their public standings are like heaven and earth, so it's an extremely natural thing to do. Nevertheless, he can't hide the gleaming interest on his eyes.

"T, this is, is this a magic sword?"

Zotor commented like so on the sword he held on his hand. That is because it feels similar to the magic sword that his acquaintance's noble superior flaunts once. That superior's sword was made of mithril. Just like with this sword, they're not made of iron alloy.

He erases his hesitation, and seeps his magic power into it. It's something that's meaningless with the iron sword he normally uses, but it's an essential act with the old sword made from monster's parts that he once had.

"Amazing...."

From his standpoint, the magic power is flowing unbelievably smooth in the magic sword.
While it's like that, he does practice swings several time with the sword, and then puts it back on the desk. He pulls the second sword the same way. They seem to be the same model as they're made uniformly. This is also something that's impossible for his common sense. Normal magic swords are something that have loose performances among each of them.

"They're wonderful swords. This is probably worth more than 100 gold coins--are you going to sell them to the official merchant?"

He asks while feeling a bit reluctant. With the current economic condition of the baron territory, these kind of swords cannot be given to his forces. Zotor is thinking that the baron probably has summoned him to inquire the price of these swords.

"Do you like it?"
"Yes, the opportunity to wield swords as good as these are very rare, whence, I am extremely grateful for being given the chance."
"Is that so. It's splendid if you like it. Accept them, those swords are yours."

That unexpected words causes bewilderment to surface rather than delight. However, just when the baron stops speaking, that bewilderment is eliminated, and delight resurfaces.

"D, don't tell me, such excellent swords are going to be lent to us?"
"No."

He's headed back to discouragement with the quick reply of the baron.

"Those swords are given to you. Divert your gratitudes to chevalier Pendragon. He's asked us to give these swords to you two."

Chevalier Pendragon--he's one of the only three nobles in this baron territory. There is no shortage of anecdote surrounding him. If the baron says that they're gifts from him, then it's probably really true. Zotor

receives the sword with both his hand. He dedicates his gratitude to the baron, and his retainer.

◇Baron Castle - Courtyard◇

"Beautiful..."
"Hohou, is newbie-chan going for Hauto-san?"
"Kya, Erina-san! Since when have you arrived."
"Just a little while a~go. And, are you aiming for Hauto-san? Doing some social upheaval?"

There are the figures of the captain and the vice-captain of the territory army swinging the magic swords they've just received ahead of the girls. There is no light on the magic sword that the vice-captain is swinging, unlike with the captain's. There's the baron daughter, Soruna with her maid attendants on the shade of a tree further ahead.

"What I'm looking is the sword that Zotor-sama is swinging. I've never seen such beautiful sword before."

Erina's eyes keeps pushing on like she's saying that she's only having an excuse.

"Like I said, it's not like that. It's impossible to have an illicit relationship with someone who's being looked with such loving gaze like that. Moreover, I have someone else I love."
"Ah~, come to think of it, you've said it before. Was it the young merchant who generously gave you an expensive magic potion when you were dying from running into a carriage?"
"Ehehe~, I don't know his name, nor his face though."

The face of someone whom Erina knows well floats in her mind, but the girl prudently keeps that to herself since she doesn't want to add anymore rival than now.

◇The Pioneer Village◇

"Eh? Apprentice is it?"
"Yes, won't you become an apprentice maid at the baron castle?"

There are two maids, and a girl in a room of one of the only two house that the Pendragon village has.

This is a pioneer village that doesn't even have monster-warding barrier pillars. It'll be no wonder if someday monsters attack, erasing this village from the map. The people that reside here are elderly that have been abandoned by their hometown, and ran-away children who are formerly serfs.

Just how does this much reclaimed field exist inside the forest, no one, including the people that live here, knows. It seems the village name is taken from the person who has helped them.

"But, I've never done anything beside farmworks."
"You don't have to worry 'bout that y'know? It's something that even me who's a former soldier can do."
"Meda, you stop talking."

Meda draws her head back from Pina's roar. Pina puts some power on her voice since she can't let her first job as the team leader ruined by her subordinate's foolish words.

"If Totona-ane doesn't want to, then I will do it! I want to be useful to Satou-sama and Arisa-chan!"
"Wait Rorona, where did that come from."
"Satou-sama gave us warm meals. He also left food so we didn't starve. Even the fields here must be something that Satou-sama had prepared."

The little girl emphasizes it with all the might on her small body. She's clearly too young to become a maid. However, Pina seems to have judged that there's no problem with it.

"Fine then. Let's heed your spirit. Rorona, we will employ you as an apprentice maid. Totona, what are you going to do?"
"Uu, please take care of me."

Totona who can't let her little sister go alone to an unfamiliar place reports that she's agreed to become an apprentice maid.

◇Muno City - In front of the Gate◇

"What is this?"
"That's, when we open the gate in the morning, it's become like this."

There are more than 100 men who look like thieves tied on several stone pillars before the eyes of Zotor who has come to the gate as he's called for. There is a writing on the stone pillar that politely says they've been captured since they're thieves.

"Hmm? Aren't you Gouhan?"
"Eh? Zotor-sama? Didn't you escape?"
"That one is Orto huh?"
"Zotor sire!"

There are some familiar faces among the thieves. They're former knights and soldiers of the territory army who had left the army due to the clash with the consul at the time. There are also former craftsmen and priests. Zotor has decided to ask the opinion of consul Nina in expectation of securing human resources for the lacking baron territory. After confirming their Reward and Punishment with the Yamato stone, the shortage of human resources in the baron territory has improved for a tiny bit.

◇Baron Castle - The Consul Office◇

"Nina-sama, it's terrible."
"What is it, Yuyurina?"
"That's, um, it's about Chevalier-sama again..."
"Him again! What has he done now!"

Yuyurina who's bearing the crest of the government service--despite her

childish body, she's the second brain after Nina in the castle--rushes into consul Nina's office while her braid is swinging.

"We've received written letters asking for us to intermediate marriage proposals from nobles in the duchy capital."

The truth is the letters have originally come for the baron, but since he's troubled as to how to handle them, he pushes it to consul Nina by way of Yuyurina. The reason why the baron didn't directly give it to consul Nina can be easily guessed.

"He went together with Karina-sama right, when did he gain that kind of philanderer reputation."

Consul Nina's expression looks disgusted, but that's understandable. For her, for the sake of the baron territory's stability, it's her wish for lady Karina, the baron daughter, and him to be tied together. That plan doesn't seem to have any hope for success since, even though lady Karina doesn't seem to be wholly to it, she's putting her effort on the wrong way, on top of the aforementioned man having only interest in little girls. Although, the story that the chevalier likes little girls is consul Nina's assumption, however, the person that can deny that is not present here.

Yuyurina opens a box with beautiful ornaments among the ones that are pilled up on top of the desk. There is a picture of the other party drawn, surrounded by the golden picture frame that seems to be made by a master craftsman. The drawings are all of young maidens. When they scan at other letters, the other parties are all of 12-14 years old girls. They're a bit too young for marriage, but it's normal for noble engagements to be that way.

The problem is the other parties pedigrees.

"Earl's daughter? Just what and how did such marriage proposal come to be?!"

Normally, the one that proposes to a honorary noble is the daughter of a wealthy merchant, or of an influential townspeople, or of the same honorary noble, that's the normal. Starting with the proposal from someone that greatly surpasses the honorary chevalier himself, proposals from the

daughter of higher-ranked nobles, and baronet turn up. There is no proposals that come from the daughters of high-ranking nobles that are higher than earl particularly.

Moreover, letters of marriage proposals for the chevalier arrive one after another after this day.

Eventually, there are three daughters of earls, around 30 daughters of nobles that are higher than baronet, and more than 100 daughters of chevalier, honorary noble, and wealthy merchants.

And then, the extreme one--

"Marquis' daughter?!"

Furthermore, there's even the handwriting of the marquis that says he doesn't mind if the person himself declines. It's not normal for a marriage proposal in itself, but it's really not like that marquis with his high pride. The marquis that she knows should be someone who is more high-handed. It's as if he has his weakness grasped.

"Good grief, even if we want to refuse or forward the marriage proposals, the talk can't continue if we can't contact the person himself. As for the letters of excuse that Yuyurina has written, let's offset it from our debt to that man."

She was probably not serious, but the sourness on her stomach seemed like it subsided when she muttered so.

The letters that have arrived afterwards are not about marriage proposals, but applications for learning etiquette through apprenticeship. It's not rare for noble daughters to become lady attendants for their training, but it's unthinkable for noble daughters of the duchy capital to come to such backwater noble place like this.

"They intend to bury the moat from outside huh. Quite the tactic."

Moreover, there is also a request to have a joint development for making orchards in the suburb of Muno city that's hard to refuse. Apparently it

seems to be an unique fruit that's immune to harmful insects and animals, and has become popular in the duchy capital. It looks somewhat suspicious, but since the other party will cover the specialists and seedlings costs for it, it's a bit wasteful to decline it.

"Kuh, Karina-sama. You have a lot of powerful rivals."

Consul Nina unintentionally muttered so. However, even she couldn't imagine that the next head miko who's also the former grand daughter of the duke had fallen in love with the chevalier in question.

The story about how consul Nina snaps from the yells of lady Karina's battle training, and goes to thoroughly lectures her is for a bit later.

SS: The Baron's Treasure

"Mou, father. Are you looking at that autograph paper again?"
"Oh, Soruna."

Lady Soruna looks slightly amazed at his father Baron who's gazing at the autograph paper in his private room alone like usual.
This autograph paper is something that his retainer has sent from Duke Oyugock capital. It's drawn with big characters which they've never seen before.

"Look at this powerful handwriting. Doesn't it look like it's shouldering the world. And also, these ancient characters that are overflowing with dynamism!　Unfortunately, it's too hard too read, but it must be words with a significant meaning."

Her smile that overflows from seeing her father nodding by himself while looking very satisfied only comes out once during the first time it's happened.
Soruna, the daughter, didn't think that he would gaze upon it every night for one month straight that continues even now.

That is the autograph of the savior of the world, the hero of Saga empire, Masaki. She doesn't know just what kind of method chevalier Pendragon did to obtain this.

The autograph paper is written with ancient characters that no one can read, that is.

『To Baron Muno-san

YES! Lolita, NO! Touch

Hero Hayato Masaki』

It's probably fortunate for them to be unable to read the ancient language.

Intermission: Sera's Misfortune

"I'm home."
"Ara, Sera-sama. Have you finished your business with Duke-sama?"
"Yes, I was only confirming the attendant's schedule."

A female temple staff greeted me when I was at the side entrance to the temple staff room. The woman always serves as the guard during food distributions.

I was just at the duchy castle, as the esteemed grandfather had called me. The kingdom conference next spring will be attended by grandfather and Tisrad-oniisama, not father. It's been decided that I'm going to be his medic for when his physical condition deteriorates.

Even though the royal capital is quite far, it's only going to take a few days to go there with the airship.

Moreover, Satou-san should be attending the kingdom conference. I look forward to meet him after a long time.

That voices in my mind shouldn't have been heard, but.

"Right right, Sera-sama. I saw sir Pendragon just a while ago."
"Eh?! W, where is he?"

I raised my voice involuntarily from her remark, which made eyes to gather here. If it's the head miko-sama, she would have forgiven me, but chief miko-sama and the head priest are going to scold me for it.

I put my hands on my mouth, and confirm to her in low voice.
Since he was going to the north in a carriage, he must have been going to viscount Shimen's mansion. I decided to ask the waiting coachman who had escorted me to take me to the viscount's mansion.

"Please wait, I think the he's going to visit here...."

I heard such voice from behind, but since I'm not going to have any work

until afternoon today, there shouldn't be any particular problem.

◇

I apologized for my sudden visit and requested for a meeting with viscount Shimen Hosaris, but it wasn't possible since he was readying to go to the royal capital. He's busy like usual.

Since I can't go back just like that, I'm going to visit the annex where Toruma-ojisama resides. He's said that it's okay for me to visit anytime, and I've asked the maid to pre-announce my visit, so it shouldn't be inconvenient for his family.

"Heya, Sera. It's rare for you to visit us."
"Excuse me for the long silence. Toruma-ojisama."

Oh? I wonder why, his face is looking sad that doesn't suit the cheerful toruma-oji.

"Sera, won't you call me Toruma-niichan like you did in the old days?"
"Ara, Oji-sama. Isn't it rude to call a married man, who has already had a baby, Onii-chan. What's wrong? Toruma-ojisama."
"Kukuku, Se, Sera-sama, please excuse him for that."

My talk partner has changed to his wife, Hayuna-sama, from Toruma-sama who's begun to look like he's crying while clinging to oba-sama.
<TLN: Oji-sama= uncle, oba-sama=aunt.>

I'd like to ask about Satou-san quick, but it's rude for me to start asking during the talk, I need some kind of topic, topic.... That's right! There's that talk choice!

"I've heard from grandfather just now that oji-sama will be granted baronet title during the spring conference. Congratulations!"
"Thank you. It's a honorary baronet, so Mayuna won't be able to succeed me though."

That reminds me, where is Mayuna-chan I wonder? I've not heard crying voice since a while ago.

"Ah, Mayuna is sleeping. Thanks to the toy that sir Pendragon had brought, she was in good mood from the beginning when she was awake until she slept after getting tired from laughing. She's not being handful, it's nice."

Yes, I've been waiting for that name to come up.

"Has sir Pendragon come here? I believe he's not going to go back to the duchy capital for a while..."
"He said that he came here alone from a trade port for a business at the scroll workshop."
"Satou-san had gone to the duke castle. Apparently, he was looking for red pickles, so he was going to ask the chef-san at the castle about it."

Chefs at the castle! Then, we've passed with each other haven't we.
I was able to quickly leave since Hayuna-sama was smoothly leading the talk for it. As expected of Toruma-ojisama for trying to stop it dead at its track.

◇

"I, if it isn't, Sera-sama. What would be your business in this place where lower-class people work?"

A lot of people are working busily in the castle's kitchen that I've visited for the first time. The maid who had guided me called the person in charge of this kitchen, but Satou-san doesn't seem to be here.

"Ah, Chevalier-sama should be going ta' the downtown after he heard about the pickles there."

This time it's the downtown! Mou, Satou-san is mean.

In the end, I wasn't able to meet Satou-san even though I went to the downtown. I couldn't concentrate during the practice that day, and got

scolded many times by the head miko-sama.

◇

"Sera, you see."
"Sera, masita was here."
"Hey! You guys, call Sera-sama with Miko-sama or Sera-sama."

Little sea lion children started talking to me when I was chatting with the wives after the food distribution was over. The official of goddess Forina who was there scolded the children for not using honorifics to call me. I think there's no need to scold over such minor things toward such little children.

"What is masita?"

I bend my knee, and match my line of sight with the children's. I'm imitating Satou-san. It seems that it's easier to talk with the children if I do this. I feel that the distance between me and the children at the orphanage on consolation visit has decreased after I started doing this.

"Umm, ummm."
"Masita is, Nana's masita."

The Nana that I knows is Satou-san's attendant. Come to thinke of it, didn't Nana-san call Satou-san with master? Moreover, I remember that Nana-san often carried these children on her arms.

"Have you perhaps seen Satou-san?"
"Satou?"
"What I saw was Nana's masita."

It's not hitting the point well, but I'm going to follow the children for the chance. The official of goddess Forina didn't look too happy, but I made the official permitted it by having some guards follow me.

The children lead me by hand to the street that's left with very few people

after the morning market is over.

"Sera, masita, was here."
"Hey, masita is?"

The children point to an elderly woman who's tidying up goods that look like pickles.

"Miko-sama, what are these children doing?"

I apologize to the perplexed oba-san, and ask about Satou-san.

"A 15 years old refreshing-looking black haired calm man, wearing refined looking robe who is also a young noble? Is he miko-sama's lover?"
"I, it's not like that! Satou-san is my friend."
"Right isn't it, you do have to value your friend."

I can't stand the encouraging very tepid gaze from the oba-san.

"Oba-chan, feed me something, I overslept too much and couldn't join the food distribution."
"You've worked every night right, buy something yourself."
"I don't even have one copper coin since I send them all as remittance for my hometown. The Kuhanou pickles I got from Sac-chan aren't satisfying to munch after all~"

A woman on her late 20s, with a slightly vulgar clothes, cut herself between Oba-san and my talk. I wonder if men are attracted to these kind of voluptuous person?

"U, umm."
"There are many young men with black hair. Oh right, the nii-san that had saved Futsuna the other day was also a black hair."
"Hmm? The one Sac-chan's talked about? Sac-chan said that he had some great techniques even though he was young. Thanks to that, she had lack of sleep."
"What are you saying in front of Miko-sama. Here, I'll give you an onigiri, bear with that."
"Yay, I love you oba-chan."

I excuse myself since I'm in the middle of a work.

"Masita, not here?"
"Satou-san doesn't seem to be here."
"Ara? The one that Miko-sama looking is called Satou? Sac-chan said that he left the duchy capital with the very first ship in the morning."

N, no way... that's cruel, Satou-san. Won't it hurt you to show up for a bit. I thanked the woman who had informed me, and went back totteringly to the temple.

But, I wonder what kind of relationship they have?

◇

It's 10 days afterward when I meet Satou-san.

『Today, light hill, your chevalier.』

I was given such letter during food distribution. I couldn't see the other party's face, but is this really from Satou-san?

Light hill is a hill at the edge of the downtown with beautiful reflection of the stars on the great river, it's famous for being a place for trysts between lovers.

I can't go to such place as a miko myself.... But, it's fine if I go just to meet him right?

◇

"A star seems to have fallen into the great river."

The priest has asked the guards to go with me.

However, the one that waits in the hill is not Satou-san.

"Fuhn? As expected of the princess of the archduke to bring along guards during her secret date~"

When the boy with white hair pulls out his sword, the guards quickly make a wall in front of me. The grandfather's private soldiers that have guarded me from a distant protect me. Due to my kidnapping incident during the attack on the duchy capital back then, they've been protecting me from this kind of ruffians constantly.

"Ahaha, with such few number of small fries, you can't stop me you know~?"
"I've been in the imperial guard since my youth days. You brat won't be able to match me."

Silver flashes glitters, I can hear the sound of swords clashing.

Very slightly after that, the guards have all fallen to the ground. The dumbfounded guards are going to run away while taking me, but the white-haired boy cuts them in a blink of an eye.

"I need to take you a hostage to lure out someone. I will pluck off your feet and hands if you resist, so be obedient okay~?"

He slowly comes to me while shouldering his bloodstained sword. He moves like a weasel who's torturing prey.

"What are you doing on someone's garden?"

Satou-san?

I wonder why, I mistook him for Satou-san for an instant even though that person's voice and height were different. That person who's wearing black clothes is about three fists taller than Satou-san, and his voice is different above all.

He's holding a beautiful sword that scatters blue light in the middle of the night, while overwhelming the white haired boy.

Is that sword a holy sword?

But, his physique is too different than hero-sama. Is he Nanashi-sama who has saved the duchy capital from crisis together with hero-sama?

After some exchange of blows, the white haired boy took some distances away. He's probably going to run. I thought that but--

"O Long Horn, feed on my hatred for the violent power!"

He was going to push the long horn that he had taken from his bosom to his own forehead, but a person with purple hair confiscated that away. Where did this purple haired person come out from?

"Give it back."

The white hair attacks the purple hair, but the purple hair evades the attack casually, and he knocks the white hair down with his fist like he's scolding a little child. The people who have guarded me aren't weak soldiers. To easily overpower the one who has slaughtered those guards like this, he must not be an ordinary person.

"What's wrong Nanashi. Weren't you going to just look from the back?"
『This guy took out something dangerous. I had to disempower him before he could use it.』

This purple haired person seems to be called Nanashi. Why does he has such stuffy voice I wonder? Nanashi-sama produced a rope out of nowhere which moved by itself to capture the boy.

With a wave of Nanashi-sama's hand, the wounds on the dying soldiers disappear.

Is that chantless magic?

『Well then, Miko Sera. I will excuse myself. Please send my regard to head miko-sama. The duchy capital sentries are coming here soon, but please don't approach that white hair."

So he said, and the two disappear like they've been swallowed by the darkness. Thanks to this miraculous encounter, it seems my life is saved. The uninjured soldiers who have been healed by Nanashi-sama, gets up and captures the white haired boy. I pray for the soldiers who have died protecting me while looking at that scene with a sidelong glance.

However, I wonder why does Nanashi-sama know my name?

SS: Lulu's Pests Extermination

<Author's Note: This is an SS with Liza's POV, not Satou.>

"Ufufu, you're bad you know? Since you've put your hands on other people's thing..."

What should I do, Lulu seems strange.

"Now, be obediently exterminated."

When I look at Lulu who's holding a kitchen knife on her hand while having a dark smile, I feel a slight cold on my back.

"Ara ara, are you scared? Pulling your hands and feet back like that. Are you trying to hide it by doing that?"

I'm at a loss as to whether call Lulu who's speaking like she's driving it into the corner, but since she'll be still speaking when master come soon, let's stop her now.

"Now, resign yourself--"
"Lulu."

When I called her, Lulu very quickly turned her body around. Looking at the kitchen knife being hold in both hands like she's going to thrust it sure is scary.

"D, did you see?"
"No, I didn't. Rather than that, master is coming, so you should end your little drama, and quickly finish catching the vegetable bugs."
"P, please Liza-san, about this, to master--"

Lulu who's drawing near in a panic looks cute, but since she's still holding the kitchen knife, I lightly take it off. Since it's dangerous.

I promise the nondisclosure, "I swear that I did not seen anything" to Lulu.

As a thank for keeping it a secret, Lulu is going to give me the thick slice of the steak today. I did not have such intention, but the meat has no sin. I will gladly accept it.

"What's wrong Liza? You look happy about something."
"No, it is nothing."

This is a secret between girls after all, so I'm keeping it a secret from master.

SS: Doctor Pochi

"It's terrible nanodesu! It's terrible if it keeps being left alone nanodesu."
"Terrible~?"

Pochi who's wearing a female doctor fashion is accompanied by Arisa and Tama who are wearing mini skirt nurse uniforms. Mia is on an outing with Aialize.
Playing doctor huh, it's really like Arisa. At first Arisa was going to be the doctor, but since it seemed like she would sexually harass me if she took the stethoscope, it had been changed to Pochi.

"Eh~ that's troubling."
"Yes, it's troubling nodesu."

Pochi folds her arms and takes an exaggerated 'it's troubling' pose.
The flow of the conversation is like the dog policeman nursery rhyme. Arisa makes fun of her shouting, "Woofwoof woowoo~f", but it seems Pochi and and also Tama have gotten used to her eccentric behavior as they completely ignore her. Arisa, how pitiful.

Let's play along with it for a bit.

"What's the terrible thing?"
"It's the Fuji sickness nanodesu! They're having shortage of Arisanium and Tamarin nodesu."

Just what are Arisanium and Tamarin? Is it something like musukonium? <TLN: lit. Son-nium, seems to be Nyaruko reference.>

I see so there is no lack of Pochinium huh. I see.

Then!

"Then, let's charge it quickly."

I say so, then carry both Arisa and Tama on my hand, and rub their cheeks.

Since Arisa's face has collapsed, I continue to only rub Tama's face.

Pochi spreads her arms with a face full of expectation, but I leave her be.
Huh? Like so she looks puzzled.

"Master, Pochi also wants to be rubbed nodesu."
"However, the ones that are lacking are only Arisanium and Tamarin right."

I shake my head, "Unfortunately", to Pochi. She's flailing her short arms, and wander her eyes around seeking for help. Nana just waves her head to the side, Liza remains silent. Lulu is only laughing lightly.
I feel sorry for her if I keep leaving her alone, so let's put out some help.

"Don't tell me that Pochinium is also lacking?"
"Yes nanodesu! It's really lacking nodesu!"

Pochi is diving from the chair, so I receive her. Arisa, who's been hit by Pochi's knee, faints while holding her back of head in agony. A~ah. Since Arisa hasn't done anything wrong this time, I heal her with magic healing.

It has been decided that Lulunium, Lizanium, and Nananium are also lacking, so I charge them with the skinship. It seems that I'm biased with charge amount of Nananium, so the alliance of power has submitted their objection.

The check is a bit too harsh me think.

SS: Fishing

"What are you making nodesu?"
"Insect~?"

Pochi and Tama peek from my sides while I'm making a tool.

"This is called a fly."
"Hairy caterpillar~?"
"It's not an insect nodesu?"
"It's an artificial bait that pretends to be an insect to catch fish."

They probably don't really understand, but Pochi and Tama fold their arms while nodding, "I see~", "Nanodesu."

Since it's right when I've just completed it, I take the two along to a watering hole nearby.
Watering holes in this world have a lot of fish, and it's not limited to this Boruenan forest. Only the ones in baron Muno territory don't have the fish.

It's one thing with the rod guides, but making the reel is too troublesome, so there's only one set of fishing tackle. I wave the fly on the end of the rod and powerfully cast it to the intended place.

It seems that there are a lot of fish brimming with curiosity, the fly is bitten the moment it lands on the water.

"Iregui~?"
"Am, amaziingnodesu! It's already been bitten nodesu. Fly is an expert nanodesu."
<TLN: Iregui: fish biting at every cast.>

Tama is happy nonchalantly, in contrast with Pochi who's too excited, she's flailing her arms around while fumbling her words.

This time I adjust the fishing line length to be at normal length, and try to land the fly on the water. After leaving it for a bit, another fish with the

same big mouth that look like the trout earlier bites. Still, to catch 50 cms fish like this so easily, there's a limit to iregui too.

After making Pochi and Tama wait for only three minutes, I give them two impromptu fishing rods with artificial baits.

"Now, try it."
"Full speed ahead~?"
"I'll do my best nodesu!"

While having meager happenings like Pochi getting her fishing rod caught on a needle tree, or Tama getting dragged into the pond by the too-big-of-a fish that she's fished, we end up catching more than 100 fish until the evening. Some fish that can't fit the fish-tank have ran away, yet it's still overflowing with fish.

"Fish festival~?"
"Are having fish today nanodesu?"
"We need to have the mud removed from the fish. I'm sorry but, today we're having whale meat like usual."

It's delicious indeed, but it gets a bit tiring after all.

"There is no problem nodesu! I like whale meat as much as Theodore nanodesu!"
"Karaage~? Cutlets?"

We keep having fried food, and we've just had steak yesterday. I'd like to have some vegetables, so I guess another kind of dish will be nice.

"Right then, since it's not really a good match as hamburg steak, why don't we have sukiyaki?"
"Hamburg-sensei is almighty nanodesu!"
"Sukiyaki suki~"
<TLN: I love sukiyaki.>
"Of course, I love the great god sukiyaki too nanodesu."

Thus, the next dinner will be with sukiyaki.

I made the fish from today into boiled fish several days later. Pochi almost cried since there were many small bones, but since Lulu patiently lectured her the way to take the small bones away, she ate it all without leaving anything behind.

Now then, what should we do tomorrow?

Death March

- Volume 10 -

10-1. Sea Travel

Satou's here. Unlike with whales, I feel that there are many people who will frown when they hear about eating dolphins. Since I myself feel sick if I hear someone's eating cat and dog, it must be because of different food cultures.

◇

"Ya' guys! Captain Arisa-sama is departing yarr'~"
"Yessire~?"
"Aye aye~"
"Nn."

Arisa and the others are playing pirates cosplay on the bow. Arisa is wearing a captain-like elongated hat and a coat with long hem, with a shirt and trousers below. She's got a rapier on her waist.

That's some slightly retro pirate huh. I thought that she was going to cosplay the pirate king, but it seems to be different.

Pochi and Tama are wearing pirate underling-like clothes, that are shirts with stripped patterns, and cropped trousers. The two are equipped with eyepatches that I've made yesterday. Making normal eyepatches wouldn't be interesting, so I made it in the shapes of a small deformed dog and cat.

Mia is wearing sailor-like clothes, or more like a white sailor uniform, and white trousers.

"Master, the tea is ready."
"Thank you, Lulu."

I get down to the area with steering wheel that's on a bit higher plane, and sit on one of the simple tables that have been lined up on the deck. After Lulu told Arisa that it was the snack time, they stopped their pirates play and rushed here.

"Huh? The sunlight here is gentle."
"Fufuhn, I've put up the [<<Sunlight Protection>>] that can cut UV from the sunlight since it'll be bad if Lulu and the others get sunburns."

It's one of the thing I've ordered from the scroll workshop in the duchy capital.
Natalina-san was confused since she didn't seem to understand the purpose of the magic.

"There's no wind~?"
"It's true nanodesu. Even though the wind blows on top, it's mysterious nanodesu."
"It's magic."
"Naruru~"
<TLN: From 'naruhodo'.>
"I see, nanodesu."

I've used the normal Air control magic for the wind, calming the wind here while sending it to the sail at the same time.
When I didn't use it, Lulu's and Nana's skirts got rolled up by the wind.
Particularly for Lulu, since she was wearing a one piece, up to her navel could be seen. Of course, officially, I didn't see it.

Our ship is currently sailing in the bay.
There are hardly any monsters in the bay.

"Dolphin! A dolphin just jumped now!"

Arisa has quickly found a dolphin that's swimming side-by-side with the ship. Please don't talk when you have something in your mouth. I create a tray sized <<Flexible Shield>> and prevent the crumbs from falling.

Arisa rushes to the rear deck behind me. The young troupe aren't the only ones lured there, Lulu and Nana also follow.
What about Liza? I look for her, it seems that she's just taken a harpoon attached with rope from the storehouse below. Apparently for Liza, it's like fishing a prey.

"It's somersaulting nodesu!"
"Prey~?"
"What are you saying, it's unthinkable to eat dolphin~ that's something to adore you know."

I think I shouldn't tell Arisa that I've eaten dolphins in a lodging at Wakayama prefecture before. Well, they're certainly cute, so I guess adoring them is fine too.
I thought that Nana was going to react the most, but she didn't seem to have much interest. Lulu is saying, "That's really a big fish", but that's an expression for when you're talking about cuisine.

"However, it looks delicious."

Liza is trying to hide the harpoon behind her, but she can't.
Everyone beside Arisa seems eager to eat the dolphin, but let's overlook it for Arisa's sake.

Even though I don't think that the dolphin feels the danger for itself, it's separating from the ship after a bit while.

◇

After the afternoon snack time is over, the ship safely gets out of the bay to the open sea.

"Uwah, it's shaking."
"It's shaking more than the airship."
"Nn."

Arisa, Lulu, and Mia seem uncomfortable with the ship shaking. It shouldn't feel like it's shaking so much for a ship this big, but I guess it can't be helped that it's shaking more than when it's on the river.

"It's alright, it's just water below us. You can just swim if you fall."

Liza remonstrates calmly. It's quite different than when she's riding the

airship.

"Nn, I can swim."
"Impossible, I can only swim for 10 meters by dog-paddling."
"I've never swum before since I was raised in mountains. Ara? Arisa shouldn't have never swam before too right?"

I see, Arisa and Lulu can't swim huh. I'll teach them how to swim when we stop by on the shore next time. I guess they need swimsuits before that huh.

"Nyahahahaha~"
"Tama, it's shaking too much, it's terrible nanodesu! Master, I'm falling nodesu~"

I can hear excited voices of Tama on Pochi who have climbed on the watchtower on the main mast before we got out of the bay. Pochi's voice seem somewhat like a scream, but since it subtly sounds like she's having fun, it's probably alright. If she really falls, I'll catch her with [Magic Hand] so it's fine.

I'm enjoying everyone's reaction like that, but then a monster appears on the radar.

Since it'll be dangerous if we meet enemies like this, let's make the ship levitate.

I touch the board on the center of the steering wheel. I charge it with magic power to activate the aerodynamic engine. The ship comes out of the sea's surface and continues to rise until the altitude where the wave crest don't touch it.

"Ara? The shaking stops? Geh?!"

Arisa becomes speechless when she peers below from the ship's deck.

Huh?
Didn't I say that this sailing ship could fly?

Everyone beside Arisa is calm, and has no question about the flying ship.

We were flying in an airship when we went to Boruenan forest after all. If one doesn't understand the theory, they probably would think that a sailing ship can fly just like an airship.

"Don't tell me, this ship is also an airship?"
"That's right. It doesn't have enough power to fly high though."

At most, it can only fly 100 meters above the ground. It also doesn't have propellers, so it can only go to the direction the wind blows.

Arisa is muttering, "Gununu", and, "Cheater". How cruel, I've made this by applying things that various people have taught me.

After confirming that the shaking has stopped, Pochi smoothly descends with the rope hanging on the main mast. It seemed Tama had found something, she also descended after Pochi.

"A big shadow is coming closer~"
"Shadow nanodesu?"

The thing that Tama has found is the Long-Neck Dragon that's chasing this ship. It has 'dragon' in its name, but it's not of the dragon race but monsters.
<TLN: 首長竜 can also means plesiosaur.>

◇

A long neck breaks out of the water surface.

"Uwaah, it's Nessie! It's a real nessie isn't it. I wonder if it'll bark with 'Pyui'?"

Arisa's tension is strange.
I understand her feeling since it's a famous UMA. But, I wonder where did I hear that it barked [Pyui]?
<TLN: maybe Doraemon reference.>

"You grilled eel! I recommend that you prostate yourself before my

stomach!"
"HUROOOOUNN!"

Grilled eel she said. The Horn Snake from before was certainly delicious though.
The Long Neck snapped from Nana's provocation, and roared. Behind me, Arisa says, "That's not Pyukichi" while tearing a handkerchief. I understand that you're having a little drama, but Liza and Lulu will scold you later you know.

"Shoot!"

Lulu, Pochi, and Tama pulled the triggers on the shotguns following my command. There's the fact that the target is big, the magic power buckshots that spread in 30 meters round shape hit the Long-Neck Dragon.

"...■■ Water Hold"

Mia's capture magic is invoked a bit later after the three, and the water ropes begins to coil around and bind the Long-Neck Dragon. The rope can't quite bind it, probably because its high level.

"...■■■■■■ <<Dimension Cutter>>"

The space magic blade that Arisa's fired makes a deep wound on the Long-Neck Dragon's trunk.
Despite the wound, the giant tusk of the Long-Neck Dragon still approaches the big shield that Nana has set up.

Nana shoots arrows of nature magic that pierce through the Long-Neck Dragon's eyes. The Long-Neck Dragon that has had its vision robbed keeps charging to Nana, but Nana evades it quickly.

I'd hate it if the ship breaks from the Long-Neck Dragon's attack, so I use <<Flexible Shield>> to protect the deck.
Liza who has amassed magic power into her spear drives it through the Long-Neck Dragon whose movements have stopped after being hindered by the Flexible Shield. Right then, Pochi and Tama assist with shotguns, shot from the deck.

Arisa pierces the Long-Neck Dragon which has stopped moving with Dimension Cutter, and Mia uses Water Burst on that wound to make it explode. Toward that torn long neck, Liza and Nana attack with magic edged spear and sharp edge invoked magic sword respectively, and it's finally defeated.

Since the Long-Neck Dragon is as big as the ship, its dismantling is done by using [Magic Hand] and [Flexible Sword] from a distance.

The Long-Neck Dragon is quite lightly delicious, although not as good as the Horn Snake. There should be some dishes using fins inside the cooking books that I've bought in the duchy capital, let's challenge myself to make it next time.

10-2. The Two Earldoms

Satou's here. There's a saying, too many boatmen makes the ship climbs the mountain. It's a saying that's on my mind whenever I attend a meeting without anyone in control, but in the other world, ships climbing mountains seems to be a normal scenery.
<TLN: It's an idiom which has similar meaning with 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'.>

◇

Our sailing ship is flying quite far on the open sea so we're not meeting other ships. Our altitude is only a bit higher than the wave crest, so the ship should look like it's sailing normally seen from afar.

That said, the ship is moving three times than an average ship, so the discerning people should notice that this ship isn't normal.

We're fully enjoying the sea travel while sometimes ignoring pirates, exploring undersea ruins, and swimming on the shores.

Since I had carefully chosen the course while looking out for ships around the area, the journey has become relatively roundabout. Halfway through, I realized that I could use illusion magic to make a reflection of the sea, but since we still had to not get too close to other ships all the same, I didn't do the idea.

We've journeyed about 1200 kilometers to the south west on the beginning of the third day. The ship is currently cruising on water surface with normal speed. It's for entering the port in the bay of the Ukeu Earldom ahead. Lulu and the others seem like they're getting seasick, but please endure it for a little bit.

◇

There are seven galley ships that are as big as our ship, and three boats anchored in the port of Ukeu Earldom. It seems the port facilities are lacking as only four of them are in the port, while the remaining six are anchored on the sea slightly away from the port.

I also lower the anchor on our ship on the sea slightly away.

Since there's no need to drop by the port, we've decided to lower the small boat and go on a sightseeing tour in the port town. After everyone has boarded the small boat, I use [Magic Hand] to put down the boat on the sea surface. Of course I did it from the location where it couldn't be seen from the port to not make us stand out.

I leave the ship's guard to the parrot-shaped scarecrows type 8. They can't fly even though they're shaped like parrots. They can only monitor or send alert about intruders, and also doing a bit of wire manipulation. This wire manipulation can move dolls that looks like sailors, and activate trap. The dolls don't have battle capability, but since they look like people working from afar, it's quite enough for crime prevention.

I entrust Liza and Nana to row the small boat. Even though it's called small boat, it's big enough to carry eight adults.

"What kind of port town is it here?"
"It's the port of Ukeu Earldom, but we can take a shortcut to the port of Kirik Earldom if we cross that mountain. We don't have to make trip around the peninsula that extends 500 kilometers far from the port here if we use that shortcut, so it's a big time saver."
"Won't it only take two days for a 1000 kilometers round-trip?"
"Arisa, you should not think that the speed of master's magic ship is normal."
"You're right. It'll take more than a half month for a normal ship."

Liza advices Arisa. It seems to be a subject which other member has no interest in, they're playing around by dipping their hands in the sea surface. Tama desperately stretches her body from my lap while attempting to touch the water surface with her hand. She should just get down from my

lap if it's so hard to take the posture.

"How long will it take to cross the mountain?"
"It's about 20 kilometers long, and there seem to be a rest area every 4-5 kilometers, so there seem to be a lot of people who get off their ships from here."

I think it'll be good if they just use magic to briskly make a canal here. They might have no budget to employ magicians though. Since it looks like it could become an important point for marine transportation between the royal capital and the duchy capital, I think there should be people who'd like to invest on it.

◇

Since an official-like man on the port gestures for us when we've gotten close to the wharf, I lead the boat to the place where it should be docked.

"Hey, merchant-san. Never seen you before, this your first time in Ukehaba port?"
"Yes, it's my first time here."

I take the ID plate from my chest and show it to the man while lending my hand to Lulu who's getting down from the ship.

"Please excuse me, Chevalier-sama. The stagecoach heading to the port of Kirik Earldom has left the port, and the next service will be for tomorrow morning. The only inn that's suitable for noble-sama is the Lighthouse Light Inn, shall I arrange someone to take you there?"
"Ah, thanks. We're going back to the ship when the night comes, so there's no need for the inn. How much is the anchoring fee for the small boat."
"It's free for one ship. If you need guards, one can be dispatched for one copper coin a day."

The official is talking smoothly as it seems that there are a lot of nobles who have gone ashore here going to the royal capital. I decline the inn recommendation, and hire two guards. However, one copper coin a day,

isn't that too cheap?

There are a lot of beastkin working on the port facilities. The raccoonkin, and the apekin are particularly the majority. There are the small ratkins too, but they're not working for loading-unloading things, but odd jobs and other jobs that don't require power.

"Isn't it Chevalier Pendragon over there?"

I turn my head toward the voice that calls me, it's the head of the noble family whom I've visited several times in the duchy capital. His name is baron Eguon if I'm not mistaken. He's someone who commands the route for getting spices on the archipelago that's located on the straight line ahead the peninsula. It's thanks to him that I could procure the needed cumin and turmeric for the curry.

"Excuse me for the long silence. Baron Eguon."
"What a coincidence for us to meet here. Thanks to you, the sales of spices have had rapid increase. I've come here myself to reinforce the trade you know."

Come to think of it, Earl Houen said to me that there was an unprecedented cooking boom in the duchy capital.

Apparently, there will be a cooking tournament sponsored by Earl Houen in three months time. I wonder if that was the reason why I was randomly challenged to cooking contests when I was visiting the scroll workshop in the duchy capital. Since I had heard the thing about the tournament earlier, I made the empty promises that I would accept the fight if they won the cooking tournament.

"If you were just one day faster, you would have met Viscount Rendo, how regrettable."

The Viscount Rendo whom he's talking about is someone who's dealing jewelries in the duchy capital. I had visited his engraving workshop and gem polishing workshop several times. Viscount Rendo seems to be currently in a trip for his customers that are spread from the duchy capital to the labyrinth city. It seems that Baron Eguon has come to this port with a

ship, he's heading toward the port of Kirik Earldom with the stagecoach from earlier.

Since it's just right, I ask the earl about earl Ukeu's and earl Kirik's personalities, and their territories information while being careful as not to get in his busy schedule.

It seems that Earl Ukeu is, politely speaking a honest person, and frankly speaking a bumpkin. His territory army is relatively strong, it seems there are only several galley ships for the marine force. They can't guarantee the safety of marine transportation then? But, pirates are like thieves that can appear anywhere in the first place. Therefore, it seems that the marine force of the territory army is reserved for the time monsters attacking the port, not for securing sea route.

Earl Kirik is a dandy and cheerful during trading, but on the other hand, he's frivolous, and skimps on money. His territory army seem to be weak, but it seems it has come to rival Earl Ukeu's force by enhancing the army's equipment and the number of personnel. His marine force seem to be slightly better than Earl Ukeu's.

Looks like the two earl's houses have bad relationship with each other. Moreover, it's not only limited to the top positions, the territories people are also competing with each other, and strifes tend to break one way or another.

Even recently, they're having an argument for the one that should bear the expense of maintaining the bridge that connects the highway between the ports of the two earldoms in the borders of the territories over the valley. And this time, it seems they're having a dispute as to whose workers should be the one that work on it, baron Eguon tells me so with a tired expression.

◇

There's an inner gate outside of the port facilities, and beyond that is the residential area. The population is about 8000 people, and 40% of them are demi-humans. There are a lot of slaves, and most of them are for manual

labors like unloading things on the port.
Probably due to the subtropic climate, a lot of the townspeople are wearing clothes with high exposures. Lots of young women are wearing wonderful clothes such as vests for wrapping their breasts, and mini skirts below. Most men are also only wearing shorts and thin shirts or naked for their upper half. For some reason, the women are busy working, while the men are taking nap and having drinking bout on the trees' shades. It's a strange scene, but that's probably just how it is in this land.

"It's like a southern country here~ let's might as well eat some local specialties!"
"Meat~"
"Meat is nice nodesu!"
"It's said that the fish are delicious in a port town like this."
"Fruits."

Liza has unusually chosen fish. We enter the large restaurant that's just nearby. Just like with the other surrounding houses, it's made from assembled thin logs, big banana-like leaves seem to be stacked on top to create the roof. It has no wall unlike other houses, so the openness feels nice.

After we've taken some open seats, a waitress onee-san with nice body comes to take the order. She's a beautiful southern country-style woman with black hair.

I'm told that a fish dish with an unfamiliar name, that is Gebo, is the specialty here, so I order that. Since it seems to be quite a big fish, I order only one serving. I've seen people making dried fish along the way here, so I also order grilled fish, and grilled dried fish for the next one.

I asked whether they have meat here, but since they only had water rat's meat, I ordered the grilled water rat meat only for the interested parties. I've expected the three beastkin girls to do so, but Lulu is also going for the challenge. I know that she's doing it for research purpose, but if she's going to be teary eyed, I think she shouldn't push herself.

There seemed to be abundance of fruits, so I asked the waitress to combine the fruits on a platter.

Gebo is a longtooh grouper-like big white fish boiled in a dashi that's made of the fish as the base. The dish is already delicious to eat as it is, but the waitress recommends us to eat it together with a pilaf-like rice on a rice bowl by piling the white meat on top of it and pour the broth on the top.

"The smell is a bit harsh, but it's a taste you can get used to isn't it."
"Yup, and the smell will disappear if you just put this Japanese pepper-like thing."
"Oh, you're right."

This Gebo is a hit. I can generally guess the recipe, so let's stock some fish later on. Since they seem to live on the seashore, we might even be able to catch them ourselves. I've seen the fish sauce being sold in jars earlier, I have to remember buying it when we get back.

"Oily~"
"It's splitter-splatter inside my mouth nanodesu."
"You two eat it without complaining. Lulu, don't force yourself and eat the fruits there to wash off the taste. I will eat your leftovers."
"I'm sorry, Liza-san."

Apparently, the water rat is a miss. It's the first time I've seen Pochi and Tama not liking meat. Price-wise, the grilled water rat is relatively expensive, about as much as the mountain of fruits that Mia is grappling.

"Is it delicious Mia."
"Nn, tasty."

In front of Mia, there's a literal mountain of varied fruits piled up. The fruits that look familiar to me are pineapples, coconuts, bananas, kiwis, and mangos. There are also several kind of citrus family fruits. There's no apple or pear. Although there are some differences like the kiwi having red flesh inside, they're similar with the fruits in my former world. Particularly the banana and the pineapple, both the tastes and the textures are the same. The mango is a false-mango. Although it looks and taste similar, it has rubbery-like texture. Arisa who's nabbing small pieces of the fruits from the side is having an impression, "This and that are acceptable" after munching them for a bit.

◇

After thoroughly enjoying the southern country-like town, we returned to the ship with various souvenirs. Fortunately, the scarecrows didn't seem to have any turn to shine.

When the day has darkened, I produce night fog. It's [Fog] magic. Unlike when it's used by Mia, the whole port becomes shrouded in thick fog. I circulate the fog to the mountain by using [Air Control] magic, after three hours, the fog has reached the port of Kirik Earldom on the opposite side.

I slip the ship under the cover of the fog, and cross the mountain by relying on the map.

Halfway through the mountain, the bridge on the border of the earldoms has fallen, while viscount Rendo and his retainers are dying on the bottom of the ravine. I've made sure the fog doesn't get to this area, but the bridge probably fell since the maintenance kept getting postponed. They're unlucky people.

The [Magic Hand] can't reach it from the fog, so I make our ship float still in the mid-air, and rescue them as Nanashi with black mask clothing.

Unfortunately, the horses and the coachman have died, but the Viscount and other guests are still alive, so I stealthily use [Magic Hand] to move them to Earl Ukeu's side. Furthermore, I've used [Aqua Heal] for them while hiding my figure, so they probably will survive. I put some food and water below the shade nearby just in case.

The inside seems to be in an uproar, but if they're energetic enough to make a fuss, they're probably going to be alright even if I leave them.

I go back to my ship, and finish crossing the mountain without meeting with anymore trouble this time. I keep the ship flying inside the fog, and anchor it on a small bay located on the outskirts of Kirik Earldom.

10-3 To the Labyrinth City

Satou's here. When I hear beach, I'm reminded of beach huts. For playing on the sea, the whole roasted squids and corns, the garnish-less curry, and the stale ramen are indispensable after all. In order to make that a reality, first I have to search the corns.

◇

Two days after we set off Kirik Earldom, we arrive on the sea near Taltumina the trade city. If I entered the port just like this, I'd have to anchor the ship there, so we disembarked on a beach with no life sign on the evening, and decided to advance with the horse-drawn carriage.

The horses are also happy with the ground that they haven't seen for a long time.

There's no human habitation around this area, probably due to the many monsters here, but there's a desolate highway beyond the nearby mountain, so I'll go to the trade city via it, and continue to the labyrinth city from the main highway after that.

"Master, night marching is dangerous. I wish for practicum on the sandy beach."
"Fireworks~?"
"Fireworks are nice nodesu! Swoosh is nice too, but crackles are good nodesu!"
"Nn."

The practicum that Nana is referring to is about fireworks.
It's going to attract monsters, but I guess I can just exterminate them if they get close.

I hand over short wands to everyone, and put it with the requested [<<Fireworks Illusion>>] on.

"Kururu~n."
"Beautiful."

Tama and Mia are running around the sandy beach with normal gushing fireworks on both their hands.

"Watch this properly!"
"Okay."

Arisa and Lulu are playing letter-writing on the darkness of the night by using the fireworks. It seems the letters are formed from the afterimages. I thought that she was going to write 『I love you』, or 『LOVE』, but, please stop writing messages that's way over it like 『When is the yobai?』. Please learn from what Lulu's written: 『Love you so much』.

"I wish for a chick."

Nana?

"I wish for a chick nanodesu."

She said it twice. Do you like chicks so much? I couldn't imagine the shape of the fireworks, so I tried to create a chick shape on the sparks that were scattering ahead of the short wand. The firework was not something that existed in the preset patterns, so the preparation took some time, but I tried my best to meet the expectation of the excited eyes on the expressionless face of Nana.

"It's a wonderful chick. Master, it disappears when I touch it."
"Because they're illusions."

Suddenly touching like that, what a troubling girl. If it wasn't a light magic type, she'd have gotten a burn. I put the same magic on the short wand once again, and warned her not to touch it.

I'm enjoying plain sparklers together with Liza.

"This is nice."

"Yeah, it is."

Before I knew it, Arisa and the others have gathered and set off sparklers.

Some boorish monsters were trying to intrude from the sea and the forest, but I repulsed them with [Remote Stun] before they went into the range of Tama's crisis perception. If this was a game, they would probably attack precisely, but it seemed that the monsters' perception ability weren't high, after hitting them with remote stun bullets several times, they had either got scared, or alerted as they went back to the sea and forest.

The next morning, we lost to the beautiful sandy beach, and enjoyed ourselves swimming in the ocean. We're not journeying in a hurry, but as it is now, it's likely that we'll camp here for several days, so I finish it by the noon, and return back to the journey.

◇

"What's this carriage. There's no shaking, it's eerie."

Complains come up even without the shaking huh. How troubling.

This carriage isn't like the wagon that we've used before, but instead a small box-shaped carriage like the one we've ridden inside towns. Not only that it has self-propulsion function on the cart section, but there's also a slim aerodynamic engine loaded below the passenger section. It has low output power, so it can only fly several meters above the ground for a short time at most. However, it can float 10 centimeters above the ground to absorb the shaking without any problem. I've properly grounded the cart section, so it should look like a normal carriage from outside.

The coachman's box and the passenger section are completely separated, so the member of the passenger's seats and the coachman's seats alternate every two hours. Right now Tama is the coachman with Lulu in the coachman's seat. Nana and Liza are riding horses fully armed, running side-by-side with the carriage.

As expected of the desolate highway, we met monsters several time, but since they were just small fries, they were easily eliminated by Liza's spear thrusts, and Nana's nature magic arrows from afar. I was surprised to see Nana who had become able to simultaneously fire five magic arrows at once before I knew it.

We could see Taltumina the trade city on the evening of that day. This city is in direct control of the king, just like the labyrinth city.

Just like the duchy capital, neighborhoods overflow on the outskirts of this city.
Outside the city's rampart, I see a long line and line of people and carriages that have been waiting for their turn to enter the city until the evening before the gate close.

Despite getting involved with annoying things like dueling with another noble since I couldn't cut into the line, we were somehow able to enter the city before the gate closed.

Good grief, please stop the childish-like thing.

◇

Since inns that are too high class refuse to let anyone beside humans stay there, I ask the gatekeeper to refer for a high-grade inn that allow demi-humans to stay.

The inn certainly has refined interior, and the room is also spacious, but I don't like the superficial attitude of the clerk. We'll stay here today, but it's going to be at different inn next time.

"Really, who does he think he is saying things like 'sleep on the floor since the fallen hair of the beastkin will dirty the bed'!"
"It's terrible."
"I express dissatisfaction."
"Mwu."

Arisa and the others seem offended, yet Pochi and Tama themselves are--

"The floor is also fluffy~?"
"Arisa, you're going to get hungry if you're mad desuyo?"

--they don't even seem to care.

Liza is quite satisfied just for the fact that the inn doesn't make them stay in the barn like slaves.

When I complained it to the inn manager, he normally scolded that clerk, so it doesn't seem to be the policy of this inn. Since Tama and Pochi replied, "Do as you see fit~", "I forgive nodesu." when the clerk apologized, I won't hold a grudge.

◇

I had a slight expectation since the port is the international trading port of Shiga Kingdom, but there were only cheap things from foreign countries, and the goods themselves weren't any different from the port of the dukedom.

The sole result are the fact that equipments made from monster's parts are exported outside the kingdom. It's not too popular in the kingdom, but it seems that they're sold for high prices outside the kingdom.

Seems that there are stagecoaches which depart to the labyrinth city and the royal capital from this trade city at fixed interval. They depart once every three days, but since about five carriages depart at the same time in one go, it's relatively safe in the way. Looks like there are a lot of peddlers who depart by matching their schedule with those stagecoaches.

Since the stagecoach will depart in two days time, the gatekeeper recommends me to stay for another day before departing, but since it'll be annoying to deal with troubles if we're with other people, we keep going.

After we've crossed three mountains, barrier pillars begin to stand out

more. It's probably the kingdom's grain-producing region around here. This is the first time in this world I see fields extending as far as eyes can see. Since the climate is warm, they've already begun the planting it seems.

After passing through several towns, we came across Kelton, the intersection city that connects the duchy capital, the labyrinth city and the royal capital. There wasn't any place or event worth mentioning in this city, but it was selling clothes, and cloth that were in fashion in the royal capital, and the soft white bread. Unlike the royal and duchy capitals, there wasn't plentiful enough water to cultivate rice, so their staple food seemed to be wheat, or rather bread.

Since there are villages that have windmills for milling the wheat, the scenery is pretty idyllic. If there were tulips growing, it would feel like we were lost in Holland.

After we've passed through a city called Furusau that's between Kelton and the labyrinth city, the number of villages start to decrease, and the wastelands gradually begin to stand out.

Although the villages that we sometimes came across have windmills and barrier pillars, the soils were obviously barren compared to the villages before.

And then, after we crossed the last mountain before the labyrinth city, it could finally be seen. Of course I'm the only one that can see it from this distance. Even though the area beyond the mountain is big enough to fit a (Japan) prefecture, there isn't any village until the labyrinth city. Looks like there are several rest areas that looks like bus stops built on the highway, one every few kilometers. I stopped by one of those rest area once, but it was just a simple building to keep out of rain and wind with an almost dried-up water well nearby.

"Sand~?"
"The wind is gritty nodesu."

From the area after the mountain, the wind has yellow sand-like small sands mixed in. Since there's a vast desert beyond the mountain range that's beyond the labyrinth city, it's probably blowing from there.

For the sake of Lulu's beauty, I use [Air Control] to prevent the sand wind coming near the area around the carriage and the horses. Of course, I make Liza and Nana to move near the carriage.

Although it's a wasteland, it's not like there isn't any plant growing. Not only weeds, there are also short bushes growing sparsely. There's also an unusual one among them. It looks like a cactus, but I wonder if it's really a cactus? According to the AR, it's called labyrinth cactus, so it seems to really be a cactus.

When we've come closer to the labyrinth city, I can see several holy stone monuments like the ones I've seen near the Seryuu city labyrinth, built on regular interval. Countless number of them are built perpendicular to the highway. I see from the map that the holy stone monuments are built until the mountain range before the desert in semicircle shape. It's written in the traveler's journal that the labyrinth is restricted and unable to extend to the kingdom thanks these holy stone monuments.

I can see a jet black mountain beyond the labyrinth city. According to the traveler's journal, there seem to be a labyrinth below that mountain.

On both sides of the city's gate, there are stone golems in the shape of Nio (the two guardian deva kings) with grim face standing. Either of them is a level 40 strong golem. They look like marble golems from outside, although it's probably not because they're matching it with the marble gate.

"Giants~?"
"Huge nodesu!"
"Announcing that those are stone golems."

Pochi and Tama who have put their head out of the window are surprised to see the golems. Come to think of it, these two didn't see the golems in the duchy capital huh. They've only ever seen Living Dolls and the Many-legged Tank Golem in the elves hometown, so this is probably the first they've seen these normal golems.

"It looks quite strong. I'm not confident I could injure it even with the magic spear. As expected, once you've broken its stance with magic--"

I ignore Liza who has naturally begun to think of the way to defeat it.

"It was far~"
"We've finally arrived haven't we."

Arisa and Lulu who are in the coachman's seat are having moving impressions.

"Now let's go, our fights begin from here on!"

Please stop it with the aborted END-like proclamation.

10-4. Explorer Guild

Satou's here. I wonder why are memberships have so much pressure on the wallet. I remember that I was able to narrowly get by when I've become a working adult, but there were a lot of time when my wallet ran out of money during my student days.

◇

"It's a big silver coin nanodesu."
"Medal~?"
"Yup, I've got it from Giril."
"Nn, Medallion of Attestation."

Giril said the same thing too if I'm not mistaken. He gave this to me when I got to borrow his mansion that's on the labyrinth city.

"Giril, mean~"
"Yes nanodesu. He didn't let us enter his home nodesu!"
"He wasn't being mean. I was making some dangerous drug in that mansion, so I asked him not to let Pochi and Tama in for your own safety."

It was about when I was making the sleeping drug for the jellyfish back then. That reminds me, I've forgotten to made up to Pochi and Tama since various things happened then.

Arisa is banging the coachman's box ceiling.
Be moderate with your excitement okay?

"Kya."
"Hey, it's a bit serious."

The carriage makes a sudden stop as Lulu screams shortly. The front gate ahead has become noisy.

I peek outside from the carriage's window, the golems on the gate have moved several steps ahead their original locations and kneel down with one knee taking retainer positions. Oh, it's a fantasy-like scene.

『Master, we have awaited for your return.』
『Master, we congratulate your safe return.』

The voices are echoing on the surrounding. Voices were coming out of the medal.

"Don't tell me, this is the reason?"
"Nn."

Mia takes the medallion from me and holds it overhead toward the golem.

『I am acting for the master. I am happy for thou greetings. However, thou duties are important, thus swiftly come back to it.』
『Acknowledged.』
『Acknowledged.』

Mia spoke to the medallion, replies came from the golems, and they went back to their original pedestals.

"You've done well to know that."
"Nn. Aze taught me."

If possible, please tell me so before the golems moved. Giril didn't tell anything beside that it was the key to the mansion, so he probably intended this to be a surprise. He's an old man that's playful in some strange point.

◇

"Did you see? The gatekeeper golems kneeled before me!"
<TLN: She's using "warawa" to refer herself.>
"Ohii-sama, raising your voice that high is unbecoming of a lady."

I heard such conversation from the white luxurious carriage that had stopped in front of us. According to the AR, she's a princess of Norooku Kingdom. She's of the same age as Lulu. She's not beautiful, but she's a cute girl with light brown hair. She's wearing expensive-looking silk clothes. Looking at the map that I've photographed from the Marquis Lloyd's mansion back then, Norooku kingdom seems to be further north of Eluett Marquisate that's directly north from here. It's acting as the buffer zone to the Saga Empire.

Since I don't want to get involved with them, we quickly line up on the queue to enter the city.

The soldiers wearing red hard leather armors in front of the gate are checking the IDs of people who are entering the city. Looks like they're checking the cargo of merchants, but it's relatively lax. There is no tax or custom to enter unlike with other cities. Hence the queue is short, and we should be able to enter the city without using the noble privilege.

"Welcome to the labyrinth city, Selbira, Noble-sama. Excuse me, but please show me your ID."

I show the humble soldier my ID plate.
However, how did he know that I was a noble.

"Please excuse me, Chevalier-sama. Is this your first visit to Selbira?"
"Yes, it is."

I inadvertently used polite speech toward the courteous gatekeeper. Nina-san would have scolded me not to use polite speech toward subordinates if she heard it.

In summary, the gatekeeper told me that there is no prohibition for items that can be taken into Selbira, but there are various items that cannot be taken out of the city. Especially taking out magic cores without authorization is a serious crime, he warned me. In addition, it seems that carrying out monster meat and poison taken from monster's poison gland is forbidden too.

"And also, even though this isn't a prohibited matter, the stalls around the

west gate only sell food made from monster meat, so it's better for you not to eat them even if they smell good."

We enter the city with such advice as the last one.

Just like the other cities, there is a 100 meters wide open space right after the gate. But, the one thing different is that's there is no main street that goes through the city. According to the traveler's journal, this city is build with monsters invasion in mind, and the streets of this city are configured like a maze in order to prevent the invading monsters reach the downtown. Due to that, there are a lot of people who get lost, even the ones who have lived here for a long time.

I change place with Arisa in order to guide Lulu.

"Lulu, I'm going to change with Arisa, so please stop the carriage."
"Yes."
"What's wrong? Do you want to sightsee from the special seat?"

I receive Arisa who presents both her hands, and put her down to the ground. She doesn't sexually harass me like usual today. Apparently, she's too excited to do that.

"Hey, first let's go to the guild and register as adventurers!"

Shouldn't we get an inn first?
Moreover, it's explorer, not adventurer.

"And then, and then! First we're going to register as F-class adventurers! And then, an unpleasant key adventurer will pick a quarrel with you, 『This isn't a job for women and children y'know?』, then you easily beat him up!"

I don't think there's a reckless guy who will pick a quarrel with a noble. Moreover, F she said. It's not like alphabet is not known, but honestly, it's a minor letter set, so I don't think they're using it.

"Then!　After attracting attentions, the newbie who has entered the labyrinth produces an unbelievable results, and the receptionist onee-san gets drawn to him."

What would you do if she does.

"Then, a rare or peculiar species is found among the result, and you get called to the guildmaster room and specially ranked up to C or B rank in one go~"

The youth troupe is clapping their hands undivided toward Arisa who's rattling on with rough breathing while staring at the air. Lulu is having small claps soundlessly with a warm smile.

"Master, if we're going to the guild, should I ask the gatekeeper the way?"

I tell Liza who has gotten off the horse that it's alright.
Even without asking, the three-story white stone building in front of us is the Explorer Guild.

It can't be helped, if we're going to the inn like this, the excited Arisa will attack me. It's still morning anyway, I decide to go to the Explorer Guild ahead.

◇

I tell Lulu to bring the carriage to the parking lot behind the Explorer Guild. A guild worker who seems to be the horse caretaker guides the carriage to an free space.

"I'm going first~"
"Wait~"
"Nanodesu!"
"Sly."

Lured by Arisa who couldn't keep calm, Pochi, Tama and Mia ran like, ta-ta-ta, toward the front door. I leave the horses that have been dismounted to the little child-like girl, and tell Liza and Nana to go ahead.

Looks like the coachmen of other carriages are staying.

"I'm sorry, we've come here to register those girls. Can I leave the carriage to you for a while?"
"Yes, Shire. Sire."

The little girl casts her eyes down while turning red as she seems embarrassed. I pat her head lightly, and asks, "Please take care of it okay." I'll give her some tips later.

I go together with Lulu to the front door of the Explorer Guild.

The inside is nice and cold, wonder if they're using cooling magic.
The floor is using marble, and it feels like a lobby of some kind of a big company.

There's a meeting booth-like place on the right side after the entrance, guild staff-like people and merchant-like people are negotiating there.

In the interior, there are bank-like counters, and only two among the eight counters that have receptionists. The receptionists are only a career woman-like woman on her twenties, and a handsome man who's over thirties.

Somehow, Arisa and the others are talking with the woman. Did she not like a man over thirties even though he's handsome. Since there's no other customer, the male staff is looking at Arisa and the others with a warm smile.

"Quickly, quickly!"
"Master~"
"Here nanodesu!"
"Here."

I go to the counter where the noisy little girls are calling. The staff onee-san is smiling wryly.

"Nice to meet you Chevalier-sama. Please allow me to be the one responsible today. My name is Kena. You're going to register for this occasion right, but is it going to be the normal registration? Or is it going to

be the special registration?"

Now then? I've never heard such thing from Sir Zotor and the explorers whom I've gotten along in the duchy capital though?

"What's the difference?"
"For special registration, the explorer ID you're going to get is the golden plate one from the beginning. Of course, the charge will be different than the normal registration, but it's a magic tool that sends signal of its specific location at fixed intervals. When you're entering the labyrinth, you have to write down the planned return time of your exploration, and if you haven't returned after the grace period, the rescue team will rush to the place where that signal is sent."

Something like specifying location, no thank you.
Moreover, rather than rescuing, I feel that it's for collecting mementos of the dead.

"Since I'm not planning to go that deep, the normal registration please."
"Yes, I understand. Then, please write everyone's name here."

I was going to take my ID from my chest, but is it unnecessary?

"You don't need the ID?"
"Yes, it's fine with the name only for your first registration. Although few, there are some explorers who register with alias or house name."

Fumu, looks like the management is loose. Even though they're letting people in to the place that's like a national mine that produces resources, is it fine without control?

After we have told her our names, she hands over wooden plates with strings attached. The wood plates are drawn with 3 digits, 2 digits, and 4 digits numbers. Of course they're not arabic numeral, but numeral that Shiga Kingdom uses. As for our plates, the first five digits on our plates are the same, and the last four digits are in serial. Apparently, the first three digits, and the two digits are for years and months respectively.

"These wood plates are going to be your IDs for the time being. Wood plates

are mark of apprentice explorers, after you've brought back five magic cores from the labyrinth, we're going to give you the true explorer plate of Bronze."

There are five IDs: Wood, Bronze, Red Iron, Mithril, and Gold. It seems that the Red Iron plate is given to main explorers who can collect several magic cores monthly, and the Mithril plate is only for first-class explorers who have defeated the Floor Master. Looks like Gold plate is only for wealthy people like nobles or someone who has paid great amount of money.

"Hey, can we enter the labyrinth once we get this?"
"Yes, it's alright."

The female receptionist answers with a smile to Arisa's question, and gives a warning to Arisa and the others.

"However, do it after you've straightened your equipments okay?"
"Ye~s!"
"A~ye"
"Yes, nanodesu!"
"Nn."

Continuing after the excited voice of Arisa, the excited voices of the youth troupe resound in the guild.
Now then, shall we enter the labyrinth.

10-5. To the Labyrinth

Sato's here. In a game, due to item limits, it was often the case that I had to tearfully throw away the items I acquired during a quest. I miss having to worry about which to keep and throw.

◇

"Ooh!　Why didn't you peek at me changing."

Not peeking at someone's changing is quite the natural thing to do, yet she's calling it bad.
Arisa and the others who have finished changing go down to the lobby in the first floor. There is no bar-room in the first floor of this inn. It's a high-class inn as even this lobby need separate payment to be used. They serve tea that's as good as the one Lulu makes.

This inn is located behind the Explorer Guild.
I actually wanted to go to the mansion that Giril had referred, but since I didn't know if we could immediately stay there, we got ourselves an inn to keep the horses first.

By the way, about the magic tooled carriage, I switched its appearance to look exactly like a normal carriage when the stable boy had left the place. The dirtiness are slightly different, but since I've made use of Evidence Destruction skill, it's probably going to be alright.

"Now then, shall we go."
"Master, it is presumptuous of me, but you should wear some armor."
"Reporting that equipments are important."
"I'll be standing by today. I have Nana and Liza to protect me."

This robe is made of Yuriha fiber, and I've used the whale leather to make the mantle and the boots, so most attacks shouldn't be able to get through it.

Just in case, I pick up the fairy sword that's leaned on the sofa while I'm wearing the thin gloves.

Since it seems that there is a carriage that goes from the front gate to the west gate every two hours, we take that to go there. Originally we should've waited for another hour before it departs, but since the passengers have reached the quota that is eight, it's going to depart just like that. It's quite flexible huh.

"Ehehehe~ this is my first real labyrinth. It must be different than the Spriggan's trials."
"It's completely different~?"
"It's not a playground like that nodesu! It's a true battlefield that makes your blood boils nanodesu!"
"You two, you would get hurt in the labyrinth if you're like that. Focus your minds."
"Roger~" "Nanodesu!"

Liza reproves Pochi and Tama who are acting like seniors to Arisa. Mia seems to be tense, she has little to say. Nana is operating normally, so she's probably fine.

"Chevalier-sama, I'm sorry, but would you be willing to allow one more person ride in?"
"Yes, feel free to."

Although it's called a carriage, this one only has seats without a roof, there are four two-seater seats lined up. If someone is as small as Mia, three of them can occupy one seat easily. When we were about to embark, the female staff asked so. Since having another one wouldn't be a problem if Tama sat on my lap, I agreed to it.

"I'm sorry for forcing in. My name is Gina, I'm a daughter of Chevalier Daryl.
"Nice to meet you, I'm Chevalier Pendragon."

It's a girl around 16 years old who's equipped with a dark brown hard leather armor, a round shield and a flail. She's about as tall as me. I don't know the precise size since it's pressed by the armor, but it looks like it can

rival Nana's. She has shoulder-length red hair, reddish brown eyes, and she's slightly tanned. I wonder if she's from a knight family, she's level 6 despite her age, and she also has Shield and One-handed Staff skills.
The flail has two iron balls connected with chains to its one meter long iron pole. Those iron balls probably improves the centrifugal force. I've seen it a lot in games, but this is the first time I do in this world.

◇

Gina seems to hate, or rather, be afraid of demi-humans, she doesn't seem like she wants to sit beside Liza and the others, so she's sitting between Lulu and Arisa. Isn't it cramped?

"Gina-sama, are you an explorer perchance?"
"Umu, I've become one just now. There are people from my town that are also explorers, so I'm going to look for them near the west gate and then go tackle the labyrinth together."

Arisa talks to her in polite tone. Lady Gina speaks like a knight, I don't know if it's by nature or if she's acting it.

I feel slightly odd with Arisa's tone, but since she's also acting like that with the hero, I leave it alone.

After leaving the quarter where the riches live, we've come to the wonderful street that seems to be the pleasure quarter. The calm atmosphere of the city up until now changes completely, engendering vulgar atmosphere. Although the beautiful women from the multi-story buildings aren't particularly waving their hands, I wonder what's with this excited feeling. I feel like I've understood Arisa a bit for looking forward to the labyrinth. Of course I don't say it out loud.

After leaving the pleasure quarter, we come a narrow aisle filled with small shops that are full of clamor. Armed men and women who seem to be explorers are having negotiations on those shops.

"Uwah, everyone is wearing gaudy armor aren't they~"

"Gaudy gaudy~"
"They're like Tori-san nanodesu."
"Kabuki?"

Hero Daisaku, what did you teach to the elves hometown. Moreover, Arisa, your true self is showing.

Nevertheless, those armors are probably made from monster parts, but I wonder just what kind of meaning do those pointless looking ornaments have? I guess it's for menacing things?

Still, equipments of explorers sure are peculiar. The equipment of the explorers who have participated in the duchy capital match are normal in comparison to these. Looks like even explorers know TPO.
<TLN: Time Place Occasion.>

There are as many young people as there are people with mysterious equipments. There is someone who's wearing sewn wood block as armor, or people who have stone axes, or black stone spears. The equipments of the magic hunters in Puta town were more normal.

◇

We get off the carriage in front of the Explorer Guild of the west gate.

The Explorer Guild here is full of people. I guess the Explorer Guild that's right before the labyrinth is more convenient for them.

"Yo', the newbie explorer noble-sama over there. How 'bout it, do you need the labyrinth map? It's three silver coins."

The market price is one big copper coin. Even ripping-off has a limit too. Lady Gina beside me is astonished, "Is it that expensive."

The map shop man seemed to think that I, who didn't falter even after hearing silver coins, to be an easy target, he tried to promote it further. Let's ignore it, and haggle it down first.

"I'll buy it for one big copper coin."
"Oy oy, ain't that too much of a beating?"
"I don't particularly need it if it's more than that."
"Wait, I'll give you for one big copper coin especially this time. We're selling the most accurate labyrinth map 'round here. If this map is useful, please buy from us again by all means."

I exchange one big copper coin for the map. 'First area' is written messily on the edge of the map that's drawn with it. The map is full of strange lines and symbols, I don't know how to read it.

"How do you read this?"
"That's another big copper co--"
"This much, include it in the fee earlier."

The small man was going to snatch more money, but I covered his words, and coerced the service. Looks like they're various trial-and-errors for depicting the three-dimensional map in a plane paper.

"What is this symbol?"
"That's a sign monument."

Summarizing the small man long-winded explanation, sign monuments are something that the olden days explorers have set up in the areas that have been completely explored, they're built on a fixed interval in the labyrinth. Three information, [Area Number], [Distance from Entrance], and [Serial Number] are carved on these monuments.

It has one more important function. It glows red when monsters are approaching, and blue when it's people. It's to prevent friendly fires between explorers in the dark labyrinth.

"However, young master. Even if it's glowing blue, don't let yer' guard down eh?"
"Why?"
"There are these thieves called Lost Thieves who aim for the explorers who have hunted monsters."

I see, there are those kind of guys in MMOs with PK too.

"What should we do if we're attacked by those guys?"
"That's, difficult to say."

If the other party attack first, you're free to either kill them, or sell them off as crime slaves, but it seems that it's hard to tell them apart if they pretend to be some friendly common explorers. Thus, if you meet other explorers, you have to be cautious and keep some distance away from each other, unless you're acquainted with them.

However, putting aside Arisa and me, I think it's hard to know if the other party has a criminal record or not. It seems that it can be judged with the Yamato stone at the entrance of the labyrinth. In case you catch them before they kill someone, there are staffs who have Mind Reading and Authenticate skills standing by who will judge for it it seems.

Since Arisa and the others have become impatient, let's put off the information gathering for now.
I got more information that I had thought, so I secretly gripped him with one big copper coin.

◇

Since lady Gina said that she was going to look for her acquaintances, she went to the Explorer Guild building, and we parted way.

The west gate seems to be normally shut, unlike the eastern gate.
When you show your wood ID to the gatekeeper, they open the gate for a bit. Being the gatekeeper here seems to be quite difficult.

When we get close to the west gate, children who are wearing short clothes approach.
Are they beggars, or orphans?

When I check on it, their occupations are [Baggage Carriers]. There are a lot of girls for some reason.

"Noble-sama, please employ me."
"Employ me, I'm alright with two pennies a day."
"I'm fine with one penny a day!"
"Hey, don't interrupt me."
"I don't need money if you give me food. I'll do anything!"

Uwah, if hero Hayato heard this, he would shout "No touch, Satou!" Liza gently push away the little girl who was trying to grab my clothes with the blunt tip of her spear.

The children inched back slightly from Liza's glare, but they keep promoting on.
Every child is level 1-2. I can't take them into the labyrinth since it's dangerous.

Pochi and Tama look like they want to say something as they seem to sympathize with the children who have growling stomaches. It can't be helped.
I take the children to the shop that's selling grilled skewers nearby, and buy one for each one of them. The skewer seems to be made of monster meat from what the eastern guild people have told me, but since other explorers are normally buying and eating them, it should be alright. Even though the skewer is quite big, they're only one copper coin each, cheap.

"Uwah, it's a labyrinth frog skewer."
"It's a feast."
"Delicious. I'll work hard noble-sama."
"Un, I haven't had feast like this for a long time."

Just what do you guys usually eat.
I've also bought some for Pochi and the others since they look like the want it.

We leave the little girls there, and go to the labyrinth. For some reason the little girls were going to come with us, but I left them since I couldn't let them.

"Little girls are looking here like they want to join the party."

Noisy.
Arisa says something like a system message from some game, but I ignore her.

The little girls were looking so reluctant toward us who had gone through the west gate that was closing, but I steeled my heart and did not go back.

10-6. Passage of Death

Satou's here. When I was playing a console-RPG-like tabletop RPG, there were a lot of quests without completion deadline time. I felt that it was odd as everyone would then just take those quests since they had nothing to lose.

◇

"Ooh! It really feels like the genuine entrance to a labyrinth isn't it."
"Nn."

There's a downward stair beyond the opened gate, and after descending five meters below, we come to a semi-underground passage that's five meters high and ten meters wide.

Looks like Pochi and Tama have remembered Seryuu's city labyrinth, they've encamped themselves on both my sides in silence.

Since the passage has skylight windows on the ceiling, it's sufficiently bright. It's not bright enough to read a book, but it's also not so dark you can't walk without a torch.

The other side of the skylight windows is probably the above ground, I can sometimes see soldiers who seem to be on patrol there.

I don't know whether the passage's way is meandering, or how long until it reaches the entrance of the labyrinth ahead. It seems to be called [Passage of Death] here, and the labyrinth is still a bit more beyond.

Since I'm free, I check various things on the MAP.

The labyrinth city Selbira has 110.000 people in total. Among them Shiga Kingdom army that's called Labyrinth Area Army is 10.000 people. The army is in the giant fortress to the southwest. The average soldier's level is

8, higher than other territory army. It's slightly higher than retainer knights, so they're probably elites. Since I have a letter from Nina-san to the general of this army, I have to see to it after we're done with the labyrinth exploring.

The army that's in charge of the labyrinth city defense is not this kingdom army, but the army of the present viceroy of Selbira, Marquis Ashinen. I've had some slight trouble with this person in the trade city, so I don't really want to get involved with him. It should be a while before he returns here from the trade city, so my duty should be fulfilled if I just give the house some greeting and passable gift before he comes back. I'll be excusing myself from troublesome things.

Now then, the search continues.

There are unexpectedly few explorers, no more than 5000 people. According to the traveler's journal there are 1000 young people who come here to become explorers every year, so I think this number is too few considering that. Fundamentally, they reside in the western area.

There are about 1000 people who are working as baggage carriers like the little girls earlier. Most of those people are working outside the labyrinth city. Are they working in some kind of public construction since they failed to find job in the labyrinth?

There are 50 people in the labyrinth entrance ahead, I wonder what are they doing?

◇

Four explorers are coming from ahead. Their level are low at 7-9. No, considering levels of knights are around 10, they might be mid-level explorers or prospective newbies. Looks like one of them is heavily injured.

"It smells of blood nanodesu."
"Someone's coming~?"

Pochi and Tama quickly notice the appearance of the explorers from the meandering path ahead.

"Nana, protect Arisa and Lulu."
"Understood."

Is Mia fine. I thought so, but Liza has already moved in front of Mia.

"I am Jeje of 『Red Ice』！ We have an injured person! Please leave the dispute for later."

A young man who seems to be the leader shouts so while waving his hand. I thought that it was a chuuni nickname, but it seems to be their party name. I can't see the face of the injured person, but the person's armor is split widely, and blood seeps out of the shirt that's been used to wrap the wound.

"Uuh, that's a really terrible wound..."
"Master."
"Nn, Satou?"

Arisa and Lulu become very pale when they look at the injured person. Mia asks with her eyes if it's fine for her to use magic, but I signal not with my hand.

"I'm Satou, a beginner explorer. Please use this medicine if it's fine with you."

So I say, and hold out two diluted magic potions from the shoulder bag. This should be enough for recovery judging from their levels.

"I'm sorry, but we don't have anything. I'll pay you back when the leader who's selling the magic cores catches up. It's shameless of me, but can I have the medicine beforehand?"
"Yes, go ahead."

Since I originally intended to give them for free, I quickly replied and presented the magic potions to Jeje.

"Huh? Don't tell me that these are magic potions?"

"Yes, that's right. Rather than that, drink it to that person fast."
"Yeah, I'm indebted."

One bottle recovers nearly 60% of the health. I can't see the wound since it's wrapped in cloth, but it should be closed now.

"Then, we'll take our leave."
"P, please wait. We still haven't paid the cost."
"I've got those from someone, so please don't worry about it. We'll meet again if fate allows."

We can't keep loitering here all day, so we part with them. I heard warning from behind, "There's an abnormal outbreak of ants in area 1-4 of the labyrinth, don't get close to it." so I waved my hand to express my thanks. That's just right, let's head there today.

Mia and Lulu are trembling, maybe they're anxious after seeing someone's injured. Arisa's tension has also fallen, but it doesn't seem as bad as these two.

"You two, should we stop today?"
"I, I'm fine."
"I'm fine."

The two force themselves to be stouthearted and walk forward with clenched fists.
If their conditions aren't restored when we get to the labyrinth entrance, let's go back.

◇

There's a big around-five meter tall door at the end of the passage. That's probably the labyrinth gate. A deep red devil's face is embossed on the jet black door.

There's a 10 meter long 5 meter wide counter beside the gate. There are several people who seem to be guild staffs behind the counter, and also four

high-leveled magicians who seem to be their escorts.

At one part of the counter, the leader of 『Red Ice』 and a middle-aged man who seems to be a guild staff are apparently arguing about the price of magic cores.

On the opposite side of that counter, children are sitting down, occupying 30 meters space.

They're human children of around 10-14 years old, the ratio of male and female is approximately the same. There is no slave. Everyone's levels are 1-3. They're wearing short clothes, and sandals knitted from weeds. There are also children who only wears trousers and without sandals. They're all not explorers, but baggage carriers. None has weapons or armors.

"Children～?"
"There are a lot of children nanodesu."
"Mwu?"

Pochi, Tama, and Mia tilt their head together while looking puzzled. I don't think they've arranged it beforehand, but they're doing it splendidly uniformly, inviting a smile from me. Arisa is saying, "I was late." while looking vexed, but let's pretend that I didn't see it here.

Now then, those children lock-on to me with their eyes without even a sound or sign. It's a bit, scary.

"I wonder what are they doing?"
"Their eyes are scary."

Arisa also wonders. Lulu feels that it's spooky, I totally agree.
I was worried that Nana would abduct them since they were all children, but--

"Denying that I'm fine as long as it's a child."

--so she says. She might have her own criteria too.

"Master, the staff is calling."

I didn't notice that the staff was calling me until Liza brought it to my attention.

"What is it?"
"Excuse me, but are you a beginner explorer?"
"Yes, please take care of us from now on. I'm Satou."
"Ara, how thoughtful of you. I think you've already heard it when you are registering, but we will buy the magic cores you get from the labyrinth here. And also, we will be buying monster parts from the notices that are hung on the wall over there, but since some of those applications posters aren't always present, there is no guarantee that they will remain when you've gotten out of the labyrinth so please take care."

I've only noticed it after the staff explains it smoothly to me, but there's certainly a big board that looks like a bulletin board standing, and it's stickied with a lot of posters. Most of the clients seem to be craftmen or stall merchants. There is no request from the guild. There is a blank space on the bottom half of the poster, it's written with symbols that seem to be date and name.

Anyone who aims for the request probably fills the space.

Beside the posters, there are children with slightly better clothes. According to the staffs, there are no small numbers of explorers who can't read, so the children of merchants who can read and write stay here to read aloud or write for them and earn some small incomes.

"I recommend the applications for labyrinth frog meat and shells of insect monsters since they're always present. There are some persons who mistake the labyrinth frog with wart poison frog and carry the meat back with them, so please be careful."

The staff tells me some recommended requests. Since behind me, Liza is nodding while muttering, "That's delicious." she probably knows the difference. She probably remembers about the barbecue party in the labyrinth of Seryuu city.

Right, might as well ask about it.

"By the way, what are those children?"
"Ah, they're children who work as baggage carriers. They're waiting to be employed by explorer parties from there. The children waiting outside change with them every two hours, and they're prohibited to promote themselves."

She added that it's because the echoes on the wall were noisy.
Still, for carrying baggage, isn't it better to employ adults or beastkin rather than those children?

When I was going to ask about it, the labyrinth gate opened, and a 10-person explorer party came out. It's a party with mostly warriors averaging at level 20. The three beastkin among them seem to be baggage carriers.

"Yo, Vena. Sorry for interrupting you, is the request for Grey Spider meat still there?"
"I'm really sorry. The 『Owl's Beard』 has brought it this morning, so I think there won't be any request at this time."
"Ceh, those guys again huh. Can't be helped, Vena, I'll grill this meat. Oy, you brats, I'll give some to you guys. You can say, "Dozon-sama is cool", or "Thank you Dozon-sama" all you want while you're eating them."

After the bear-like bearded explorer declares so to the children, shouts of joy that split my ears are raised.

Pochi and Tama were also lining up as they seemed eager to eat it, but they came back immediately when I called them. I'd feel sorry to snatch the feast of those undernourished children after all.

We show the gate staff our wood plates one by one, and tread upon the labyrinth. The guild staffs looked surprised toward Pochi and Tama who opened the solid labyrinth door.

Well now? What is it I wonder?

10-7. Labyrinth Exploration

Satou's here. The labyrinth from the classic masterpiece, the one that has been made into its own game genre, seems to impress people. Although, in the other world, it has stronger implication as an American dream than a romance.

◇

"Uwah, this time it's stairs huh..."
"Arisa, maybe it's good for you to start weight training or jogging to build up your physical strength."
"Uy～"

I lightly push the back of Arisa who looks like she's about to cry, and advance on the stair.

There's a broad stair beyond the labyrinth entrance. It's not a normal or spiral stair, but a meandering one. The stair probably has been installed on this place with its broad winding slanted path and high ceiling.

There are crenels along the stairway rails on fixed intervals for shooting arrows below.

They're most likely used to cope with monsters invasions. There is a barbette on the center of every stair step, enshrining artillery wrapped in a cloth. Two soldiers are standing by on each barbette.
They seem to be free as they're playing a board game similar to Shogi. It's probably better than drinking liquor or dozing off. The soldiers aren't human but beastkin such as wolfkin who look strong.

Since I'm free while we're descending the stair, I try to use All Map Exploration for a bit.

Wide.

Even compared to the withered labyrinth of the duchy capital, it's unbelievably wide.

Even only three areas of this labyrinth can completely swallow the entirety of Seryuu city's demon labyrinth.
The search only ranges to [Labyrinth of Selbira: Upper Stratum], yet it's likely that there are hundreds of areas. Just like the demon labyrinth and the duchy capital labyrinth, the labyrinth has lower stratum that extends underground, there must be at least twice the areas more.

In one area, there are roughly 100 corridors and rooms connected three dimensionally. There are also an area where there is only one room, or one that contains 1000 small rooms only among those areas.

And then, despite such vastness, there are 30 areas which have explorers within. Most of them are in the first area and the seven areas that adjoin it. In the underground, there are around 2000 explorers, 500 soldiers, 300 baggage carriers, and 400 lost thieves. There are also several dozens other people beside those.

Arisa and Lulu have become tired along the way on the stair, so Liza and I carry them. Lulu who's burying her embarrassed face on my back is ticklish. Leaving Lulu aside, I think it's better for Arisa to train her physical strength.

◇

There are many people in the first room of the first area. This room is bright since there are lighting from magic tools-like things that have sprouted on the wall. As for its size, I wonder if it's easier to understand if I say that it's about the size of three standard gymnasiums connected?

All of the soldiers beside the ones on the stairs are here in this room. About 90% of the soldiers are doing practice swings commanded by senior-like person on one section that's on lower elevation. It's not just soldiers as there are also magic soldiers like Zena-san among them, but there are few of them compared to Seryuu city.
However, the [Red Ice] people earlier should have reported about the

monsters outbreak, yet they're so carefree. Maybe something like monsters outbreak is just a daily happening huh.

There are also stallholders beside them. I'm amazed that they're doing business in this place.

Most of them are food stalls, grinders, equipment repairmen, or general stores, but there are also some interesting ones.

"The noble-sama over there, would you like to touch someone who bears the 『Item Box』 gen before you level up? One touch is one silver coin, but if you're lucky the 『Item Box』 may dwell in your slaves or subordinates you know?"

That seems interesting, but every one of us has already touched Arisa who has [Item Box] herself, so it's meaningless.

"Noble-sama do you carry enough food and water? It's one copper coin a meal. How about it?"
"Noble-sama, do you have the map? We're selling the first area map for one silver coin."

They promoted it as such, but I declined since I wasn't interested. I was slightly interested with the take-away food, but since its ingredients were unknown, I passed on it.

In this room, there are three big corridors that are five meters wide each. There aren't just big corridors, small ones also exist. There are more than 10 of them, but none connects to other area. There are armed staffs of explorer guild before the door that leads to the interior of the main big corridor. There's a spiral stair that leads underground in that interior, and it continues to outside of the map search range. Let's invade it alone next time.

We're walking to the big door that leads to the [Area 1-4] that Jeje of the [Red Ice] earlier has mentioned. The soldiers who had made military encampment by piling sandbags in front of that door also warned us not to get close to area 1-4 since there was a rumor about ants outbreak there.

"It's alright. We're only going to see things today, we're going back after going around the first area."
"Ah, that's fine then."

I tell so to the soldier who's giving us warning, and go through the door that Liza and the others have opened.

◇

When we're advancing through the big corridor, leaving the big door behind, Liza verifies our formation.

"Master, what should we do about the formation?"
"When we're moving, the center is Lulu with Mia and Arisa on her sides, the advance guards are Nana and Tama, the rear guards are Liza and Pochi."

With this formation, we'll be fine even if we get attacked from the front and the rear.
Moreover, they should be able to fight without me, and it might be better if I don't act too overprotective and let them grow up.

"Mia, use 『Bubble Searcher』 magic, and confirm the frontward okay."
"Nn."

Mia replies Arisa's request in short, and invokes a magic. It seems that they always use this magic first and foremost in the Spriggan training grounds to search for enemies.

This magic produces around 30 bubbles that float in the air. They're brittle as they will break if you just touch it, but you can feel the things around it like feelers. The detection range is only about 30 centimeters from the bubbles, but the bubbles can be separated several hundreds meters away from the user. Moreover, the effect lasts for about 2 hours if the bubble doesn't break, so it's quite useful for exploring labyrinths.

However, its weakness is that the magic will be canceled if the user uses other magic.

"Should I use lighting magic? I don't have light magic skill, but I can do at least that much you know?"
"No, there's no problem even though it's dim, so it's alright."

There are dim lighting equipments on one side of the corridor that illuminate only from knee-high to the ground. That's probably the Sign Monument. Just like what I've heard, its color changes from white to blue when we're approaching.

Moreover, Pochi and Tama can detect monsters and traps, while Mia's search bubbles can detect things that approach from outside their ranges. There are small passageways and cavities and shelters indistinguishable with the former piled with spiderwebs and dust on the corridor's wall that appear at fixed intervals.

"There's something~?"
"I hear sounds of battle from beyond the path nodesu."
"Nn, a battle."

Pochi and Tama noticed the battle ahead, and slightly later, Mia's bubbles seemed to have caught on the battle between six demi-goblins and five explorers 300 meters ahead.

There are air holes on the ceiling of the labyrinth corridors that constantly emit low-pitched noise, as the consequent, it's difficult to sense presences from faraway sounds. In fact, even Pochi and Tama seemed to be slower than usual to notice it.

The explorers and the goblins seem to be in a small corridor branched from the big corridor we are in. They're not too far away from the big corridor. They seem to have noticed us approaching, one of the explorer raises his voice to warn us.

"These goblins are ours. You go over there."
"Acknowledged."

I don't want to distract them too much, so I answer shortly.

It seems to be quite the melee battle as the explorers are hurt equally, even though they're only up against level 1-2 goblins. These explorers are around level 3, so they're probably newbies. Like I've thought, they're all warriors. Explorers that have magic skills are only around 5% of the whole, so they're probably scarce.

There are hardly any monsters in this first area we're in, maybe because there are too many explorers.

There are some corridors where monsters are moving within, but it seems they're not connected to where the explorers are, so we never meet it. After observing it for a while, battles begin in a faraway corridor that's connected with that corridor by the tunnel.

I see, so monsters POP up with this mechanism.

◇

"Enemy coming."
"Insects, three～?"

Yep, correct.
Fly-type monsters came out of the small tunnels around the ceiling. There are three of them. Every one of them is level 3.

"You insects! So I declare."

Responding to Nana's provocation, the flies made nose dive attacks.
Even though this was a commemorative first battle, it's over before Arisa took off the cloth wrapped on her wand. It was settled with Pochi's and Tama's stone throwing, and Liza's spear attack.

"Uu～, the enemies are too weak～"

I comfort the vexed Arisa by slightly roughly patting her head. I praise Pochi and Tama who are wagging their tails, and Liza who looks like it's obvious yet also slightly triumphant.

After one hour, we're getting close to the big junction that connects to [Area 1-4]. We've gathered nine magic cores while passing through several rooms and junctions to here. Since one person should need five magic cores to raise their rank, it will be for two people's shares one more.

We've only encountered fly-type monsters like the ones from the beginning. We also came across normal rats, insects and bats that weren't monsters, but since they wouldn't give much EXP, we left them alone.

A lot of monsters are reflected on the radar at last.

Around 300 ant-type monsters, and 12 people from three explorer parties and baggage carriers are coming to where we are.

10-8. Labyrinth Exploration (2)

Satou's here. I think that positioning is important whether it's in RPGs, War Simulations, or FPS. You really can't make light of terrain effect you know.

◇

"Satou, enemies, a lot."

Please stop talking that way like you hate me.
Slightly after Mia, Tama who's in foremost position seems to have caught on the footsteps' sounds of the explorers.

"People coming~?"

Pochi steps forward from behind, and puts her ears on the ground beside Tama.

"This sounds must be from insects nanodesu."

Covering Pochi's words, Arisa who looks grave asks me the exact number of the enemies.

"How many are coming?"
"Are you asking about the enemies or the people?"

I felt like doing something slightly mean. She replied quickly, "Enemies", so I honestly told her that it's 300.

"Th, three?"
"Master, advising to withdraw."
"Master, I also agree with Nana."
"Nn."

I holds the trembling Lulu on my arms. Everyone has judged correctly and

carefully. Muscle brains who would want to fight enemies that are 40 times their number wouldn't be going to the labyrinth after all.

"It's alright~?"
"It's alright nanodesu. It'll be easy if we're with master nanodesu!"

They're here, the muscle brain girls.
Pochi and Tama have taken their curious signature poses. I ask the two while patting their heads.

"What would you do if you're not with me?"
"Of course, run away nodesu."
"Helter-skelter, quick~?"

Oh? They're not muscle brain, but trusting me.

"Yup, that's good. You shouldn't fight enemies three times your number or more even if they're lower ranked than you."
"What should we do when you can't avoid fighting them?"
"What do you think you should do?"

I return Arisa's question with a question.

"Right, I guess make use of geographical advantage?"
"Correct, you should take the position where the enemies can't make use of their number."
"It's the basic when I was solo hunting in net games after all~"

I see, that kind of knowledge huh.
I had only ever fought against small fry that could be killed in one blow when I was solo-ing in the MMOs I played, but various things seem to be different depending on the games.

◇

Now then, although we don't have any obligation to save the unknown explorers, but it's some monsters after much pain. Let's make them into

experience points for everyone.

"There are people who are running from the monsters this time, so let's fight to save them."

I propose to go to battle while using an appropriate reason. Everyone immediately replied with their consents.

"Of course, when you're not with me, you should run away at full speed and give maximum priority to your own life okay?"

Just in case, I gave them the warning.

We retreat to the path behind for a bit, and encamp ourselves on the ramp with piled-up debris where it's easy to fight many enemies. Here the rear guards should be able to send magic and long-ranged attack from behind by flying it over the head of the vanguards who are fighting.

The problems are that we can only see 50 meters ahead since the corridor is curved, and we can't lay traps on the passage since there are explorers who are running away toward here.

As an insurance, I invoke [Remote Arrows] and hide them in the shadow of the ceiling. Of course I've properly restrained myself and only created no more than 30.

◇

A party that consist of rabbitkins and ratkins are running from beyond the corridor like literal startled hares. Behind them are party of male humans, and the last in line are a party of female humans, and baggage carriers children, although they still can't be seen.

"Run!"
"Oy you guys, group of monsters are coming y'know."
"If you don't want to get eaten, don't be confused and just run!"

The demi-humans party give unanimous warnings to run while they're passing us on the side. The three of them are level 7-10 warriors.

Next, only three people of the male humans party are explorers, the two men with good physique who follow them are baggage carriers. Those two seem to be slaves.

"Oy, you slaves, if you drop the jar of ant nectar, I'll cut you bastard's limbs and feed them to the ants."

The slaves don't answer to the merciless men and keep running after the men in silence. The explorer man who's rebuking them is level 13, the highest among this group. The two slaves are only level 4.

"Besso. Those 『Beautiful Wing』 have fallen behind."
"Fuhn, it's too bad with Jenna, but we won't be in the red if we have a jar."
"You're right, let's run while they're getting eaten."

They only glanced to us, and passed by from the side.

The party of female explorers are coming way later after those two groups. Among the four, two are explorers, while the remaining two are baggage carriers. One of the carriers seems to be injured on her leg, and the other one is leading her by hand to somehow pull her.

"You people over there! Run! There's an outbreak of labyrinth ants."

Although the way of talk is like a man, she's a woman. She's in her early 20s, and although she's not a beauty, her face has a certain charm to it. She has a short wooden spear with bronze tip and a wooden shield, she wears an armor that's cotton clothes sewn with woods. I wonder if that armor is popular in the labyrinth city?

"Do you guys have a smoke ball or a flash ball? You'd get caught up."

The other one is a 20 years old beauty-san. Her breasts are slightly bigger than Lulu's, she's a calm looking person with black hair that's bundled on the back. Her name is Jenna-san.

Unfortunately, we don't have the item that she's asking. The fireworks magic can probably act in their place, but it's faster to just use firebolt to burn the ants rather than using that.

The two looked behind beside us and held their breaths toward the baggage carriers behind.

"Iruna-san, help! The ants! The ants!"
"Onee-chan, I'm fine already, onee-chan should escape alone."

The labyrinth ants that are as big as a human are chasing the two who are displaying sisterly love from behind.

I signal to Pochi and Tama.

"Ey."
"Yah."

The stones that the two have thrown get a clean hit on the ant that's going to bite the carrier sisters. The ant who has lost its balance tumbles to the ground and entangles its legs with the other ants. About 30 ants also tumble to the ground in series, and the rush stops. The remaining 270 ants haven't arrived yet.
Of course the serial tumbles are not coincidence. I secretly use [Magic Hand] on the labyrinth ants' legs to tumble them over.

I nod to Liza who's looking at me.

"Nana, provoke them. Rear guards, begin the shooting."

Arisa, Mia, and Lulu; the rear guard prepare the usual Soft Shotguns on the safety zone that is on the top of the ramp.

"You worker ants! I'm telling you to overwork yourselves to death!"

Nana's provocation is working, the ants hostilities turn here--that's fine and all, but please stop with the overwork to death part since it hurts my heart.

After the provocation, the three shot the labyrinth ants with the soft

shotguns. Since they're originally weapons for suppressing humans, it give almost no damage.

"Pochi, Tama, let's go."
"Assent~?"
"Acknowledged nanodesu!"

Liza assaults while leaving the usual red afterglows from her magic spear. It's overwhelming that she tramples an ant with each of her blow.

Tama puts magic power into her two short magic swords, and defeats the labyrinth ants in flutters like she's dancing. Against small fries like these, the dual-wielding Tama is the fastest in decimating them.

Pochi has also gotten used to putting magic power into a magic sword, she moves linearly while accurately aims her short magic sword to the gaps on the labyrinth ant's shell, defeating them.

Nana deals with the ants that have gathered from her provocation by using shield bash with her magic sword and great shield. Her strength has been increased by physical reinforcement, she's moving with the goal to push the ants back rather than to defeat them. She's probably learned this way of fighting in the Spriggan trial grounds.

Since the labyrinth ants are only around level 4-6, it seems to be unsatisfactory.

"Amazing, they're easily defeating those hard labyrinth ants."
"The magic earlier might have weakened the ants' defenses."

The two female explorers lend their shoulders to the carrier sisters and carry them here. At first Liza was going to help them, but it looks like she's judged that assistance is unnecessary.
Looks like they see the shotgun attacks earlier as magic. Of course the shotguns don't have defense down effect or anything like that.

"We're saved, noble-sama."

The charming-san who seems to be the female explorers party leader talks

to me. We're in the middle of battle, but since there's enough room for it, it's fine. Moreover, I want to ask something. For some reason, everyone who has met me sees through me as a noble in one glance. I want to know the reason.

"Don't mind it. Rather, can I ask something."
"O, of course, I will absolutely reward you when we get back to the town."
"No, you don't have to do that, how do you know that I'm a noble?"

The female explorers look slightly awkward, but then, the charming-san who's called Iruna answers my question. The beauty-san is treating the baggage carrier little sister who has hurt her leg. The baggage on the big sister carrier's back seems to be heavy as she's kneeling on the ground while trying to adjust her breathing and isn't looking around her.

"Because, you're wearing such high-class robe in a labyrinth like this."

I see, so it's the problem with clothes. However, I think it's normal for a magician to wear robe.

"Moreover, you're hanging such expensive looking sword on your waist."

Even though I've properly arranged Nana's and the others' magic swords with plain scabbards, I forgot my own sword.

"Moreover."

There's still more huh.

"Only nobles-sama bring those, maid-san in their dresses, into the labyrinth."

Ah, I've overlooked it since those are their usual attires.
Lulu is wearing maid uniform, and Arisa is cosplaying [Combat Maid] uniform which I've made after getting carried away. Those were equipment that I presented them when they were doing the Spriggan trials.

Their defense powers are higher than even the metal armors that knights wear you know?

While we're having such out of place conversation, Liza and the others are resolutely exterminating the enemies. The rear guard troupe are free after the first attack since they're completely safe.

10-9. Labyrinth Exploration (3)

Satou's here. I've done some explorations in dungeon-exploring game without preparation before, but in real life, the problem with food and water is real and loom over you. Though in the other world, the problem of drinking water can be solved with magic.

◇

There are only 10 Labyrinth Ants (Maze Ants) now from the 32 ants before. Halfway through, some ants that Nana had failed to handle almost surrounded Pochi and Tama, but Arisa and Mia supported with magic from the rear and managed to avoid further problem.

"Tama!　I'll make a wall on the left, so attack from the right. Right is the direction with the fork!"
"Aye～"

Arisa's magic, [Isolation Wall (Deracinator)] is particularly effective. Looks like the more advanced version of this magic, [Maze (Labyrinth)] can create isolation walls that form a maze which arbitrary lock enemies within. It seems the magic power consumption for that is quite large, but she's said to me that she'd like to try it when the trailing ants have caught up.

The female explorers party whom we have saved earlier are still around. After those girls understood that assistance is unnecessary, they begun to intently watch the vanguard's battle. Judging from the words of admirations that occasionally leak out of them, they're probably fascinated.

Although the main body of the ants swarm won't be arriving in another 10 minutes, a group of ants are closing in to here from the monster-only passages that connect to this corridor. It's a group with little over 20 ants.

"Rustlerustle～?"
"There are sounds coming from the other side of the wall nodesu!"

Looks like Tama and Pochi have detected the crawling ants in the wall while they're fighting. They've done well to do that while having such intense battle.

"Satou, sign monument."

I look at the place where Mia points from atop of the ramp, the light is flashing red and blue like it's going violet. I wonder if it's reacting to the enemies who are coming from the other side of the passage?

"Noble-sama, that's the sign of the gushing holes creation. Monsters will come out of those holes."

The leader of the female explorer party warned me so.

It's not from the main battlefield of Liza and the others, but around the sign monument behind us. The passage wall that look like stone wall in a glance is thinning out like mucous membrane, turning into small passages.

Now then, I guess I should take care of this one. I draw out the fairy sword and cut the ants that gush out of the wall in half with a single stroke of the sword. I took care as not to cut the magic cores in half.

A small passage has also been created behind the female explorers, and an ant is crawling out of it. I warn them about it since they don't seem to notice it.

"You there, behind you."
"Eh? There's a gushing hole here too! Jenna, let's do it."
"Yes. You two, please get away."

The carrier sisters follow Jenna's words and withdraw to the back.
About this female explorers party, [Beautiful Wings], Iruna the leader is level 8, and Jenna the beauty-san is level 6. The crawling ant is level 5, so they should be able to easily win.

Or so I thought, but they're having a hard fight.
They thrust their short spears while blocking the ant's attacks with their

shields, but the ant's outer shell repels the attacks, and they don't seem to give it real damage. They should have aimed for the gaps on the shell like Pochi and Tama do.

Since the ant was showing a sign of attacking with acid toward the beauty-san, I picked up an ant's claw from the remain below my feet, and threw it to the ant's neck to disturb it.

I took out a tongs from the bag, used it to pick up magic cores, putting it into a small bag.

Liza and the others' fights seem to be over soon too. When I looked back at the female explorers after finishing collecting magic cores, they were still in the middle of attacking and defending against the ant, so even though it might be meddlesome of me, I cut the neck of the hissing ant, ending the battle. This much should be normal for a level 30 magic sword user.

I reply the girls' thanks by lightly waving my hand, and then head toward Liza and the others who have finished their battle.

"Master, should I commence the materials collecting?"
"Just the magic cores is alright. The ant's shell is soft after all, so there is no use for that."
"Master, the shell should be usable for making armors or weapons. I believe that the claw should be better suited for daggers or sickles rather than spears since it's slightly curved."

It seems that in Liza's hometown, materials from ant monsters are highly valued for making tools.
Although it's weak enough to be broken by normal iron swords, it seems that there aren't enough material for making equipments since the people here even use wood chips for armors, I guess it might be good if we bring the ant materials to the above ground?

"Meat~?"
"We won't have meat festival nodesu?"
"Let's not. Ant's meat is bitter and it's not delicious. There are some cases where children get food poisoning when they eat it too."

Food poisoning is scary.
I feel sorry for Pochi and Tama who look disappointed, but I'll treat them to some meals that I've stored in the Storage later, so please put up with baked sweets and water for now.

◇

"Noble-sama, here it is."
"Isn't that from the one you two have defeated?　If it's for reward, your words from earlier are already enough."

Iruna the female explorer presented a magic core that seemed to have been taken from the ant, but I pushed her hand back.

"Rather than that, you should escape soon. My companion's magic has caught wind of a swarm of maze ants coming here. They will get here in less than a quarter of half an hour."
"Noble-sama won't run?"
"We'll escape after we've appropriately kept them."

I implicitly said that it would be better for us if you escape. The female explorers finally sluggishly got up and begun to escape. I catch sight of the ant nectar jar that the older sister carrier carries on her back. The ants might be chasing after that unexpectedly.

Now then, more than that, let's prepare for the next battle.
I gather everyone and replenish their magic power with [Magic Power Transfer (Transfer)]. It's quicker than using magic recovery potion, and above all, it's free.

While I'm at it, I use [Soft Wash], and [Dry] to cleanly wash off the ant's blood.

"Then, I'll set up the 『Maze(Labyrinth)』 from here to the corner over there okay."
"Can you make wall that won't let them pass but let our attack pass?"
"Nn~ I do have 『Isolation Cage <<Deracinator Jail>>』, but the enemies'

attacks will also pass through it, so it's not suitable for enemies that use long-range attack you know?"
"No problem, first, everyone will attack with Soft Shotgun, and Mia will use 『Water Screen』 to block the enemies' acid attacks."
"Okay."
"Nn."

After the briefing is over, Arisa uses [<<Deracinator Jail>>] to create a lattice. Since it's radiating dim light, I can see the shape of the lattice. Stabs and shots can pass through it, but slashing attacks will probably be stopped by the lattice.

I set up [<<Flexible Shield>>] just in case. It's an insurance for when some acid attacks that pass through the lattice can't be defended by Mia.

"They've come nodesu."
"Everyone take your position~?"

Everyone is readying their shotguns behind the impromptu defensive wall that's been created by piling up the ants' remains with cloth on top.
The large swarm of ants show up from the corner and rush here while resounding their hard legs' footsteps. It's quite intense even though we have the magic lattice. Mia and Lulu have leaned to me on both sides, looks like they're scared. I pat their heads to sweep their worries away.

"Wait a bit more."

The ants vanguard crash into the isolation cage, scattering their bodily fluids. Looks like the vanguard ants can't stand the weight of their friends behind, their health have been greatly reduced. There are black insects squiggling in front of the lattice, it's become a sorry sight.

After waiting for around five minutes, all the ants have gathered in this corridor.

"Shoot!"
"Roger~" "Nanodesu!"

By my command, the seven gun muzzles incessantly rain down countless

buckshots. I secretly adjust everyone's muzzle with [Magic Hands] to make it hit as many enemies as possible.

"Nana, Pochi, Tama, put down the gun. Prepare for close combat."

The shootings are finished, and Arisa invokes [Maze(Labyrinth)]. Afterwards, the monster extermination process is as simple as the vanguard defeating ants and then Arisa lets out some other ants. Nana and Pochi sometimes got caught with the ant's attack, but their armor and mantle kept them from taking damage.

The vanguard aren't the only ones busy, the rear guard is also busy. Looks like managing the maze is hard for Arisa. Too many enemies have gathered on one section of the maze, so she's adjusting the maze's path. Mia is working hard to follow up with [Bind Mist] when there are too many enemies, and [Blind Mist] to decrease the enemies' accuracies.

I'm free since I'm only watching everyone, so I use [Magic Hands] to gather the defeated ants alongside the wall.

Since Lulu doesn't have anything to do after shooting the shotgun in the first attack, she's begun to retrieve the magic cores of the ants I've gathered. She's not only wearing mittens, but also an apron and a hood so her hair and clothes won't get dirty while working. I told her to be careful about the acid gland on the ant's mouth so she wouldn't get burned.

After they've defeated around half of the enemies, the vanguards look very tired so it's better if they take a short break I guess?

"Arisa, I want to let the vanguards rest. Do you have enough magic power to maintain the maze?"
"Okay, it'll be dangerous if they become lightheaded after all. I can reduce magic power consumption if I only need to maintain the maze state, so it's alright if I just drink some MP recovery potion later."
"Alright, then let's take a break after they've defeated the enemies they're currently fighting."
"Ho~i."

Pochi and Tama vigorously said, "Not yet~" and "I can do it nodesu!", but

they were visibly staggering, so I made them drink water and sandwiches with salted ham and a lot of mayonnaise.

Since everyone is young, they have become like different people just after taking a break and napping shortly for 30 minutes after the meal. Arisa has recovered her magic power after a bottle of MP recovery potion and [Magic Power Transfer], so the second round begins.

It seems that the ants who didn't come here were rioting all over the first area of the labyrinth, but the female explorers party from before had safely got out of the labyrinth.

After the ants have been completely exterminated, Pochi and Tama fall down from depleting their stamina, but since their faces look like they've fully accomplished something, I consider it a good thing.

Since Liza and Nana were also totally exhausted, I decided to rest on the temporary camp at the higher ground where Arisa and the others were positioned. Everyone seems to be really tired as they sleep like a log, I keep the night watch with Lulu.

Nevertheless, everyone has leveled up in one day.
Labyrinths are quite efficient after all.

Author's note: Mia and Lulu have leveled up by one, while everyone else by two levels.

10-10. Labyrinth Exploration (4)

Satou's here. When I'm engrossed with something, I often forget the time. Like when an MMO got a new version, I stockpiled two days worth of food and engrossed myself with the game.

◇

"Nana! Endure it for a while. Pochi, Tama, use Magic Edge! Let's settle it in one go."
"You ivy!　Are you a plant or an animal, be clear about it, so I complain!"
"Magic Edge～" "Go～ nanodesu!"

With Nana's provocation, the Thorn Foot rushes by crawling with its octopus-like ivies toward Nana, and entangles her body. She quickly cuts the ivies with her nature magic Sharp Edge-strengthened magic sword, so the ivies don't have any chance to twine around her. Geez, I'd have liked if it was a bit more erotic.

While my mind is in another place, Pochi and Tama cuts the main ivy that's connected to a giant thorn with their magic edged magic swords.

Arisa pierced the bump part of the Thorn Foot's head with her [<<Dimension Cutter>>], severing half of the bump.

Lulu who's beside her fires a big caliber magic bullet from her magic gun, completely blowing away the half-torn bump of the Thorn Foot.

There, Mia demonstrates the effect of [<<Water Shredder>>], shredding the monster's rind by making use of the body fluids that flow on its surface.

Lastly, Liza drives her magic edged Spiral Spear Attack on the legs-like ivies of the Thorn Foot, finishing it off.

"Big victory～?" "Nanodesu!"

I clean everyone who's raising cheers of victory with life magic and heal them in one go with [Aqua Heal]. I leave it to Mia to heal injuries during battles, but it's my job to heal injuries after the battle is over.

They were fighting against a level 30 Thorn Foot this time, but they were able to reliably beat it.

This is the area 1-4-9-17 that's overflowing with plant-type monsters. The name seems to be like this since the place you end up in can differ even if you're in the same area depending on the course you've passed through. Since it's long, let's just call it area 17. In here, plant roots that are hanging on every room emit light so it's bright. I tried cutting those plant roots before since I was curious, there were light fiber-like things in its cross-section. The natural light fiber roots and stalks must have brought the light from outside.

Due to that reason, there are a lot of plant-type monsters in this area. Various enemies have attacked us, like the walking ivy monster like before, a big tree monster which fires durian-sized acorns from its cannon-like part, a walking corn monster that rapidly fires its thumb-sized kernels like a machine-gun, or carnivorous plants that send out their slime-like mucus feelers to predate upon us. Any one of them is around level 20-30.

One interesting monster is called [Walking Bamboo (Ugi)], they look exactly like a bamboo. You can extract green-tea colored sugar by processing the fiber of this monster's main body. Furthermore, its leaves are raw material for potion stabilizer. The ivy of this Walking Bamboo (Ugi) and the Thorn Foot that we've just hunted now are material for making intermediate potion. Since the ivy would start to contain toxic after it's left to decompose for a few days, I compounded it by following the instruction on the documents of the elf alchemist.

I can see demi-goblins and herbivore monsters sometimes, but since low-leveled monsters are just a hindrance, I exterminate them with Remote Arrows.

There is no one in this area besides us, partly because area 9 is infested with small insect monsters and slime monsters that especially use poison,

disease and paralyze inducing attacks, on top of the area being a traps heaven. It seems that even for the past explorers, hardly any have come to this area, there are only around 20% of the sign monument compared to the other areas.

◇

"Alrighttt! I did it! I've leveled up to 27 from just now!"
"Nyahaha~?"
"Did it nodesu!"
"Self-conceit is prohibited. This is the result of master being here."
"Affirmative. It is thanks to master."
"Of course I feel thankful. Other enemies don't come when we're hunting one, and convenient enemies quickly come right after the break, it's a program that will even freak out an efficiency freak."

I take no notice to Arisa's subtly impolite praise.
We walked slightly further in since the enemies were too weak in area 1-4 where we fight the ant in the beginning as it wouldn't have become a training for everyone. Thanks to the suitably strong enemies in this area 17, it has become an efficient level up training. I'm concerned with Arisa who was lacking in stamina, but according to the person herself, it was because she had raised her stat to be oriented toward being a magician. During the (stat) adjustment on level up, she had raised (her other stats) to be at standard level so she had somehow resolved it. I'm quite envious that she can arbitrary allocate her stat points.

Since this place (the labyrinth) has night and day cycle, and the ground looks like bare soil, it doesn't feel like underground. Moreover, there are water sources, and the air don't get muddied even if we cook since there are air vents high on the ceiling. It's probably the best place for camping and hunting.

Since I could easily split groups of monsters by using earth magic to control the bare soil, it was easy to make only one monster could fought everyone at a time. The reason why Arisa didn't use her space magic to split monsters was because it seemed hard for her to use space attack magic while fighting

against higher-leveled enemies.

"Come to think of it, a few days have passed already, is it alright for us not to return to the city yet?"
"We have a lot of water and food, so it's fine isn't it?"

Four days have already passed. We've only raised 2-3 levels each day, but since we've leveled more than 10 levels since our entry, the result is quite good.

The big one is particularly Lulu who has gained life magic and nature magic skills, and Mia who has acquired Spirit magic skill.

Arisa has also acquired fire magic skill when she's gotten her space magic skill to level 8. Apparently, the required point to level up to level 9 and more was too large, it almost made her heart broke she got something else. She picked fire magic that's good in battle since she could use advanced level magic the way she is now.

According to Arisa, body reinforcement magic of fire magic creates the energy by burning fat in your body, so it's good for diet. She boasted that it was something that the elves had taught her.

As far as my analysis goes, it uses nothing but magic power so the body fat things must be the elves' joke. I failed to mention it to her since she looked too happy, but I have to tell Arisa before she begin overeating.

◇

Since we had already annihilated all the enemies in this hall, we went toward the log house that we had been using for the last four days in order for having dinner.

The log house that was made from plant-type monster materials originally only had a living room, but it was added with more rooms and got improved little by little every day. Right now it has become like a villa which has a living room, a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a workshop.

We're growing tomatoes and medicinal plants on the patch of soil in front of the villa. Let's plant all sort of plants like flowers, soy beans and potatoes the next time we come here.

This hall is located in a place where there are watering hole and air holes, gushing holes can't be formed here. There are three passages on this hall, but I've put up doors with magic keys on each end of the passages, and left threefold traps there. Since even Tama has given up canceling the traps halfway through it, it's probably enough for preventing crime. I've made it to be able to be unsealed with authentication magic tools and passwords since it would be troublesome to go in-and-out otherwise. I've included simple version of barrier pillars on the doors in order to prevent bodiless-type monsters intrude.

"I'm home."

We enter the log house while unanimously saying so. This log house is installed with scarecrow series surveillance mechanism that will send alarm [Signal] when they discover an intruder. There are abundance of mana in the labyrinth, so I made use of the jellyfish's feelers to gather mana for the magic power needed to power the surveillance and alarm mechanisms.

I think the doors and the traps from earlier are enough, but just in case.

"The hot water have been boiled."
"Yeah, I'm going."

Since Arisa has called, I put the blueprints of the bronze Living Armor for guarding this villa on top of the sheet, and head to the bathroom.

Recently, Arisa who has learned the fire magic does the heating. At first the bathroom was partially destroyed by fire since she made a mistake during the heating adjustment, but she's become able to reliably do it now.

"Everyone is already waiting, undress quick quick~"

Since it was troublesome to make the changing room, undressing is done in

the living room. Everyone will get caught up in Arisa's bad influence if I'm too tardy, so I use quickdress to change into waist coiled with towel style and enter the bathroom.

Everyone who's in one-piece yukata like Arisa's wearing is waiting in front of the bathtub that's made of cypress-like wood. I don't think that I must be the first one to enter, but since Liza and Nana were insisting, "The first bath is for master.", me entering first has become the custom.

After Liza and Nana pour hot water from both of my sides, I set foot into the bathtub. I slowly lean my back on the bathtub's edge, and relax my mind and body with the hot water that feels just right.

There are a lot of spirits in the watering hole here. I don't know whether it's because they're the prey of the monsters, or simply because it's the gushing point of an earth vein. Just by submerging in the hot water, I feel that my body feels light like it's being massaged, the spirits might be massaging me unexpectedly.

While I warm my body, I'm washing the back and hair of the youth troupe besides Arisa. I also washed Lulu and Arisa before, but Lulu had become so red it looked like she was going to faint, and Arisa was too excited she got a nosebleed and fainted, so they get left out.

Since Mia who has won the janken for the first player is already waiting with a shampoo hat, I quickly bubble her hair with the shampoo soap. This shampoo soap is something from the recipe I've learned from the elf hometown alchemist, Tsuya-shi. It's not as good as the shampoo from my former world, but it produces more bubbles than a normal soap and it's tender for scalps. I made the shampoo hat for Pochi, but for some reason, Mia and Nana also have become to like it.

After washing the hair of the little girls in turn, I warm up my chilly body in the hot water and count to 100 with Pochi and the others, and then we get out of the bath. I tried not to be captivated by Nana who had her yukata become slightly transparent from the hot water, but it was quite hard.

◇

"I'm thinking of going back to the above ground tomorrow morning."
"Eh~, let's get back after we've leveled up to 30."
"I'd very much like to, but I've only paid the inn for five days, so if we don't go back tomorrow, our carriage and horses would be sold off you know."

I persuade Arisa, the only person who's complaining, by telling her the reason to go back. Putting aside the carriage, I feel sorry if the horses get sold off. The horses are our companions who have accompanied us in the long journey after all.

"Moreover, we can instantly go back here if we leave the carved seal board right?"

That words seemed to be the decisive factor, succeeded persuading Arisa.

Before we go back, I choose the booty we're going to take above ground.

Among the magic cores, I decided to put the large quantity of deep red magic cores acquired from area 17 inside the Magic Bag <<Holding Bag>>, and left it in the log house. I've already used large amount of the small whitish magic cores from the ants and small fries for making diluted magic potions, but there are still more than 100 of it remaining. I put only these magic cores into a small bag and bring them along.

Since everyone will look at us dubiously instead if we don't bring any monster material, I've decided to bring 10 of the ant's breast shells, carapaces and claws each that are in acceptable conditions, and also some labyrinth frog meat. Every one of them had been in the purchase list of the guild.

I remembered something and decided to bring some yellow lizard meat that weren't in the purchase list. They were strange lizards that looked like an iguana with feelers, but they were delicious with chicken-like taste and little fatness.

◇

With [Return] magic, we return to the hidden room in area 1-4 that we've found. Of course I had made sure that there were no monsters or explorers in the room beforehand with [Clairvoyance] magic. Making sure of the situation ahead for teleporting is simpler with this magic, so I use it often recently.

Since I discovered around 30 lost thieves that were approaching like they were enclosing us when we were in a junction of the first area, I dealt with them with three consecutive [Remote Stuns] before they were even in our field of visions. They probably won't die, but since I hit them with 2-5 shoots each, they're probably going to be fainting in agony for a while.

Since I took some detours by using some small passages along the way, we safely got out of the labyrinth without even encountering the fainted lost thieves.

We were meet with a surprise outside of the labyrinth, but the surprising vector seemed to be slightly different than what Arisa had expected.

<AUTHOR'S NOTE>

They seem to be living comfortably in the labyrinth.

The following skills changes are tentative. I might delete them when I make character glossary for chapter 10 later.

●Main Characters Levels and Skills Changes

Arisa...Level 27
Skills:
[Never Give Up]
[Over Boost]
[Self Status]
[Status Check]
[Hide Skill]
[Item Box]
[Space Magic (Lv8)]
[Fire Magic (Lv1)]

Liza....Level 27
Skills:
[Spear]
[Thrusting]
[Heavy Blow]
[Magic Edge]
[Magic Edge Cannon] (new)
[Spiral Spear Attack] (new)
[Flickering Movement] (new)
[Dismantling]
[Cooking]

Tama....Level 27
Skills:
[Short Sword]
[Throwing]
[Two-Swords Style] (new)
[Magic Edge] (new)
[Enemy Search]

[Unlocking] (new)
[Trap Cancel] (new)
[Trap Discovery] (new)
[Horseback Riding]
[Dismantling]
[Gathering]

Pochi....Level 27
Skills:
[Short Sword]
[Heavy Blow]
[Helm Splitter] (new)
[Magic Edge] (new)
[Shooting]
[Throwing]
[Enemy Search]
[Dismantling]
[Flickering Movement] (new)

Lulu....Level 26
Skills:
[Shooting]
[Sniping]
[Self-Protection] (new)
[Life Magic] (new)
[Nature Magic] (new)
[Chanting]
[Marshalling]
[Etiquette]
[Cooking]
[Compounding]
[Service] (new)

Mia....Level 20
Skills:
[Short Sword]
[Bow]
[Water Magic]
[Spirit Seer]

[Horseback Riding]
[Spirit Magic] (new)
[Self-Protection] (new)

Nana....Level 27
Skills:
[One-handed Sword]
[Shield]
[Parrying]
[Provocation]
[Horseback Riding]
[Nature Magic]
[Abduction] (new)
[Capture] (new)
Nature magic:
[Magic Arrow]
[Short Stun]
[Shield]
[Light Boost]
[Signal]
[Sonar]
[Fence]
[<<Floating Board>>]
[Sense Magic]
[Sharp Edge]
[Shelter]
[Protector] (new)
[Fake Patch] (new)
[Magic Shelter] (new)
[(Blank)] (new)
[(Blank)] (new)
[(Blank)] (new)

————————————————————————

Name: Satou Pendragon
Race: Human
Level: 34
Affiliation: Shiga Kingdom Barondom of Muno

Occupation: Apprentice Explorer
Rank: Chevalier
Title: Magician of Dining Table
Skill:
[One-Handed Sword] (new)
[Life Magic] (new)
[Nature Magic]
[Evasion]
[Alchemy]
[Blacksmith]
[Woodwork]
[Cooking]
[Arithmetic]
[Estimation]
[Society]
[Heraldry]
Rewards and Punishments:
[Muno Barondom Medal of Blue Gleam]
[Muno Barondom Army Medal of First-class]
[Oyugock Dukedom Medal of Blue Flame]
◆
[Muno City People Medal of Honor]
[Gururian City People Medal of Honor]
[Puta Town People Medal of Honor]

※ Satou's stat is from the exchange column for public status. His original status is concealed.

10-11. The Value of Safe Return

Satou's here. In my primary school days during my visit to my grandfather's house, I took part searching a mountain where a neighbor middle school kid was believed to be spirited away. I can still remember the serious faces of the adults back then even now. That middle school kid seemed to have been playing in the city, and they scolded the kid harshly afterward.

◇

"Should we head back immediately after we have renewed the inn booking?"
"We can't nanodesu!"
"Ara?　Didn't you say『I belong to the battlefields』?"
"Walking the horses～" "Nanodesu!"
"Eh～, they're just horses, we can just ask the inn caretaker to do that."
"No good no good～?"
"Arisa doesn't understand nodesu."
"Nn."

I take no notice to the little girls' conversation as my mind is occupied with the thing that's happening on the first hall just ahead the passage.
There are nearly 200 knights in full equipments like they're going on a march. I wonder if they're on a mission to save an important person? Since there are people like a foreign country prince and the youngster an earl house inside the labyrinth, their target might be among them.

Arisa who was running out of breath when she was descending this stair has become able to calmly climb it while conversing. Level ups are great after all.

We enter into the labyrinth gate that Pochi and Tama have opened, going outside of the labyrinth.

There, I see the face of someone whom I didn't expect to find here.

"Viscount Shimen! It has been a while."
"Ooh! Chevalier Pendragon, so you're safe!"

I can guess the current situation while being surprised by the calm older brother of Toruma who's suddenly hugged me. I affirmed that after hearing Toruma-brother's story.

It started from the rumor about some half-destroyed explorers who acquired ant nectar that he heard in a noble-only saloon when Toruma-brother was visiting the labyrinth city to get a hold of rare magic cores the day before yesterday.

When he asked about the detail, he heard that the explorers were saved by a black haired young noble who had an excellent mithril sword and brought along little beastkin girls, and a magic spear-user lizardkin girl, he seemed to have associated them to be about me.

Then, he asked the Explorer Guild about it just in case, and the fact that we had become explorers, went to the labyrinth and had not come back yet came to the light.

At first he requested the Explorer Guild rescue unit to be deployed, but since they persisted that they couldn't dispatch it before the scheduled date of our return had passed, it wasn't going well. Good going Explorer Guild. If they had dispatched yesterday, it would have made many things complicated.

Therefore, he directly talked to the General of Labyrinth Army, borrowed some elites to form a rescue unit, and asked some explorers to become the guide. The viscount himself wouldn't be going into the labyrinth of course, but he purposely came here since he's acquainted with the captain of the unit.

"I'm very sorry for making you worry."
"No, judging from your conditions, I've jumped to the wrong conclusion myself. I'm sorry for making this commotion."
"I already said right, against a magic warrior who can repulse a lower

demon, even if the first four area monsters ganged up on him, they wouldn't even nick him."

The knight captain who's wearing a full body armor entered the conversation by saying so. This person seems to be a honorary viscount.
Toruma-brother has come to an agreement to deliver some barrels of wine and five sheep to the soldier barrack. I will apologize to the General together with Toruma-brother tomorrow. He told me that I didn't have to go, but as an adult myself, I couldn't exactly say, "Oh is that so.".

The knights seem to be going to eliminate the lost thieves since they've made preparations and all. It's just right since the ones I've knocked down should be still there.

Toruma-brother seemed to be busy, he left a subordinate to deal with the trivial after promising about the tomorrow matter.
The subordinate-san is a 40 years old man with good physique. I wish it was a beautiful female secretary instead.

◇

After parting with Toruma-brother, we go to the purchasing counter of the guild staffs before the labyrinth gate.

"Congratulations on your safe return."
"Thank you."

Congratulations?
I feel that there's something wrong with that, but since it seems like she's blessing me, I thank her.

"How was the result?"
"We've got magic cores, labyrinth ant's materials, and labyrinth frog's meat."

I take them out of the satchel. I purposely did it like this to leave an impression that we are in the possession of a magic bag <<Holding Bag>>.

It's better than having them suspiciously think that we have Item Box.

I take out more than 100 magic cores, 10 of ant's breast shell, carapaces, and claws each, and 100 kilograms of labyrinth frog meat.

"T, that's a lot of magic cores."

Just as Arisa's expected, the face of the guild female receptionist is cramping. It seems to be within common sense as it's not enough to create a commotion.
I think it's actually unexceptional considering our levels, but maybe it's unprecedented for first-time explorers since the guild have onlye information about their names. I'm really glad that I've left the magic cores we've acquired from stronger monsters on the campground.

"Are these all Chevalier Pendragon-sama?"
"No, although I don't know if they have purchase request, I have the meat of strange yellow lizard."

I already knew that it had no purchase request, but since the meat is delicious, I've brought it to treat the children who are standing by here. There are only 20 kilograms of the meat, but it should be enough to treat them.

"Strange yellow lizard? Is it that legendary ingredients?!"
"Oy, Huey. Appraise this meat. It seems to be of the yellow strange lizard."
"Is that true. You've done well to defeat such fast running lizard."

Come to think of it, it was trying to run away from Tama's surprise attack, so I caught it with [Magic Hand]. I had thought that its price was too high, so it was a rare ingredient huh. I ask about the prices of the other things while they're appraising it.

The labyrinth frog meat is worth four copper coins a kilogram, so 100 kilograms are four gold coins.

The ant's breast shell is two silver coins, and the carapace is one silver coin. I think the carapace can be used for many things, is there a few demand for it? The ant's claw is quite cheap, 10 of them are one silver coin. It's two

copper coins a piece.

"It's the strange yellow lizard without a doubt. It's 10 gold coins if you sell it to the guild. You can possibly sell it higher if you bring it to the city, but in that case, the tax for carrying out will be one gold coin."

I don't particularly need to pay the tax since it can be deducted from the materials and magic cores I'm selling it. Since the market price is 20 gold coins, it's more profitable to sell it in the city even if I have to pay the tax.

As for the magic cores, each one of the 103 magic cores of the labyrinth ants is one copper coin, the strange yellow lizard's core is one silver coin, and the labyrinth frog's core is two silver coins.
The staff-san teaches me how to break down the price of the magic cores.

"These lots of small magic cores are White 9 and Vermilion 1 so they're of the lowest grade. Please note that it's the lowest priced core since there is little use of this low-ranked magic core."

I asked her to teach me the detail of magic core grades.

It seems that the deeper the red color of the magic core is, the better.
There are four colors classifications which are White, Vermilion, Red and Crimson, [White 9 Vermilion 1] to [Vermilion 10] are the low grade, [Vermilion 9 Red 1] to [Red 10] are the intermediate grade, [Red 9 Crimson 1] to [Crimson 10] are the high grade, and above it is the highest grade, [Blood Crimson].

Since the level 30 frog is [White 7 Vermilion 3], while the level 15 lizard is [White 2 Vermilion 8], it doesn't seem that being higher leveled means that the magic core will be better. By the way, the whales' cores are Deep Crimson. I don't have any intention of selling it, but I'm slightly interested just how much is that giant magic core worth.

Since the price of the magic cores doesn't depend on quantity but its grade and weight, the staff-san politely measures it one by one while wiping them. There's a magic tool for this measurement, it calculates the price after you set the value standard on the ballast. It's quite an excellent thing.

However, she's implying that the [White 9 Vermilion 1] magic cores don't have any use, but I've used it normally for making diluted potions, I wonder if there are individual differences?
The guild staff breaks down the total and shows the written blackboard to me.
I've decreased the labyrinth meat I'm going to sell by 20 kilograms.

"Do you agree with this amount of money for the purchase?"
"Yes, good enough."

The deal has been made, and I receive the documents needed for us to rank up from Wood plates to the Bronze plates from the guild-san. Strangely, they don't check whether I'm carrying something out. I wonder if the checking is lax?

I got permission from the guild staffs to borrow the BBQ stove beside the counter. It seems that they're loaning the set and the fuel for one big copper coin.

◇

"Noble-sama, so you're safe!"
"I'm glad!"

The two people from the [Beautiful Wings] called and hugged me. The women seemed to have thought that we were defeated and abducted by the ants. Putting aside the muscle body of charming-san, the soft embrace of the beauty-san is very wonderful.

Since Lulu who's grilling some frog meat is looking here with a complex expression of surprise and reproach, I gently pull the two apart. Arisa and the others were busy ordering the children to line up, so they didn't notice it. It seems I've avoided the guilty festival.

"I'm glad that you two are also alright."
"It's thanks to noble-sama."
"We were really saved by you."

These girls seem to be the explorers who were going to guide the rescue unit. Apparently they received a fine for not only causing trouble for other explorers, but also the labyrinth army. The fine was expensive, so the prize money they got from the quest weren't enough. They were being vague about it, but they probably borrowed money to cover the deficiency.

The children who are treated with grilled meat on wooden skewers come to me to say their thanks, and then get back near the wall to enjoy the food. Arisa had specially told them that I was the one who treated them while she was distributing the meat. Everyone seems to be experienced from the food distribution at the duchy capital, the children line up while keeping the order.

The beastkin girls ate the little of meat that had remained. You girls, haven't you each just eaten 10 kilograms of the meat yesterday?

10-12. Courtesy Calls

Satou's here. Even though I've forgotten about it after I got used to internet payments, formalities are something that take time. Although I understand that it's necessary, it still makes me impatient.

◇

"Heya, I'd like to extend my booking period, is it alright?"
"I-if it isn't Chevalier Pendragon-sama. We're glad to see you're fine, w-w-we can extend the period yes. I'm very sorry, but we're going to clean your room, so please relax yourself in the lobby for a while. Of course we won't charge you the admission fee.

How do I say this, the inn owner looks suspicious.
Right at that time, Pochi and Tama who have gone to see the horses come back.

"The horses aren't here~?"
"The carriage isn't here too nodesu."

Hohou?
Glint, Arisa's and Liza's look toward the inn owner. I'm smiling like a Japanese person would.

"T-the horses are currently being let to exercise on the ranch. Since the carriage was dirty, it's being cleaned in a studio that usually deals with high-class carriages. Of course they're free since it's our inn's service."

I see, he secretly sold them since he thought I had died huh?

"Hou? That carriage is something that I've ordered from the master craftsman in the duchy capital, it worths no less than 200 gold coins. It's not a studio that would damage or peel the paint is it?"
"Y, yes. Of course it is not."

Let's claim 200 gold coins if the paint really gets chipped. That's the actual market price after all.

"Liza, Nana, I'm worried about it so could you go and see the carriage?"
"N, no, you don't need to do that. Everyone must be tired since you all have just got back from the labyrinth. We have just acquired some good lambs, so how about some meal. We'll pick up the horses and the carriage from the store, so please wait for it while you're having the meal, that, er..."

How do I say this, he's too small time. So small I can't imagine he's the owner of this high-class inn. Maybe he's the son-in-law taken by the family, and thus wanted some small sum of money?

"Everyone, the inn owner-dono will treat us to a meal, thank him properly."

I'll make him treat us with plenty of lamb dishes as the compensation for his trick. That much should be fine. The youth troupe thank him unconcernedly. I'm not sure if the owner thinks that his trick has been found out or if he's successfully deceived me, but he honestly treat us with dishes.

The horses and the carriage were safely returned to the inn when we had finished our meal. I guess I'll forgive him since he didn't try to change the horses. I'll treat the horses to some specially-made feed later.
Now then, even though the horses and the carriage have been returned, we still shouldn't stay in this inn for long. I've extended our booking period as intended, but I'll check the current condition of the Ivy Mansion before we dive into the labyrinth next time, and if it looks habitable enough, we'll probably move there.

◇

"What is the meaning of this, Heson! What's happened to my carriage! After overcharging it to 300 gold coins, now you're backing off from the deal, what is this."

There are people who don't know TPO out there huh.
I see, so my carriage was going to be sold at 300 gold coins huh. He seems to be quite excellent at overcharging people.

"Baronet Dyukeli-sama, that mistake happened--"

The inn owner draws closer to the old gentleman who looks like a wire. Urged by the landlady, we went to a passage guided by an employee.

I don't intend to thrust myself into an unnecessary trouble, so I come back to the room and take a rest with everyone. While being covered by little girls on the bed, I read the Toruma Memo in the menu.

It seems that he has investigated Baronet Dyukeli too, but as expected, even Toruma couldn't have personal connections with such faraway nobles, there are only two informations written, [A follower of Marquis Ashinen], and [Deals with Magic Tools].

However, there are slightly more detailed information written about the current viceroy of Selbira, Marquis Ashinen. Information that sound almost like he's badmouthing him; like how the previous generation had died unnaturally in the royal capital 20 years ago, or that the current marquis is stingy and like bribe money, or that he's a hen-pecked husband and arrogant.

It's written that Marquis Ashinen will soften his attitude toward someone who's brought him some expensive gift. Since it seems that it's better for the gift to be of the vulgar [Looks Expensive] kind rather than work of arts, let's present him with the gold nude woman statue I've acquired from my duchy capital acquaintance. Since that thing worths 20 gold coins, it should be enough. It's also written that he's into men, but since he likes the macho-type one, I should be safe as I'm outside his type.

I'll bring some presents for the wife too since it's said that he's a hen-pecked husband. According to Toruma Memo, she likes jewelries and confectionery, so I've decided to bring some jewelries I've got from the duchy capital, and some castella. Since hotcakes seem to be all the rage in the duchy capital right now, I choose a slightly different kind of castella.

I slip out of the bed after confirming that everyone has fallen asleep, and ask an inn employee to deliver a letter that contains my wish to meet face-to-face with the viceroy to his mansion. Since I'm scheduled to meet the Labyrinth Army General tomorrow afternoon, I've made an appointment to do this one the day after tomorrow.

◇

"My, you've already collected the needed magic cores quota?"
"Yes, this is the achievement proof I've received from the staff-san on the labyrinth entrance."
"Quite a wonderful result isn't it. Have you entered a labyrinth before?"
"Yes, another labyrinth for a bit."

I make which of the labyrinth vague. She seems to have asked about it casually too, she doesn't seem interested to ask which labyrinth it is.

"Well then, please wait on the sofa over there while for the person in charge that will guide you."

Pestered by Arisa and the others, we went to the east guild after breakfast to raise our rank to bronze. By the way, the breakfast were dried white breads, potage pumpkin soup, and scrambled eggs with thick sliced roasted bacons. The line-up somehow feels like something that have been influenced by a reincarnated person.

We've been guided to another room, and then we submit our IDs from Muno city, and sign the official registration deeds. I checked it with magic perception just in case, but there didn't seem to be any magic-related trap. We were offered to check our status and skills with Yamato stone free of charge for the rank up, but I refused since there was no need to do that particularly.

"What would you like for the party name?"

Everyone began to argue from the words of clerk-san. Since it didn't seem like it would be decided immediately, I asked the clerk-san some time.

"Chevalier Pendragon and His Mistresses."

Rejected.

"Pochi and Master."
"Ara, Pochi-chan, do you not like being together with us?"
"I-it's not like I don't like it nodesu. Pochi and Master and Tama and Liza and Lulu and Mia and Nana and Arisa is fine nodesu!"
"Long~?"

Lulu teases Pochi's verbal slip. She corrected it immediately, but just as Tama's said, it's too long.

"It should be more concise. How about Demon Lord Slayers?"
"Isn't that like a title?"

It'll be troublesome if there's someone who believes that, and most people will probably laugh at us for trying to be like heroes.

"Young Organism Protection Corps, so I recommend."
"Eh~, then we would be obliged to protect the little girls in front of the labyrinth."
"I'd like to at least protect them from starvation though."

Is there no organization or something that distribute food in this city?

"Chevalier Pendragon and His Pleasant Friends sounds nice."
"Lulu, you really are Arisa's big sister after all."
"Eh, Liza-san, what do you mean by that?!"

Looks like Lulu has been steadily dyed with Arisa's Showa power.

"Friends of Fairy."
"Well they are our friends and all~ But it doesn't sound like a party name~"

And, I guess Tama is the only one who hasn't stated her opinion?

"Nn~? Eat Meat Corps." <TLN: "Niku ga tabe tai".>

"Eat Hamburg Steak Corps."
"Eat Roasted Whole Bird Corps."
"Eat Chocolate Parfait Corps."
<TLN: In Japanese, they're all pronounced the same as "I want to eat (corps' name)">

Isn't everyone just mentioning the thing they want to eat while pretending to suggest the party name? But, I'd like to eat chocolate as it's been awhile. I feel that I'd find it if I search around the southern archipelago.

I had a feeling that we wouldn't ever decide on it if it continued like this, so I registered my house name as the temporary one.

"Well then, it'll be complete in three days, so please use these temporary bronze plates until then."

Each of us receives a temp bronze plate that's carved with East-1~East-8. The official bronze plate probably takes time to complete since it's carved with the owner's name and the party name.

◇

The General of the Labyrinth Army is a middle-aged man with hooked nose who's the very picture of someone from a noble family with his arrogant air. It's the younger brother of Duke Bishtall from back then, Honorary Earl Eltall.

After the greeting, we begin to apologize to him. For the time being, I've brought three kinds of smoked food and the dragon spring liquor as presents. I've also asked the inn to make the liquor store deliver several kinds of first-class liquor in barrels to the soldiers.

"Hou, so he's the outstanding talent who's carrying the future of Shiga kingdom huh?"

I harden a little from General Eltall's words.
I don't remember carrying that future you know?

"That's right. Thanks to him, Muno City which had become the breeding ground of demons was saved, and even the lower demon in Gururian city was destroyed with surprisingly low amount of victim.
His and his retainers' abilities are probably equal to first-class knights' prowesses.
And, in addition to his battle prowess, he's also well versed in magic. He single handedly developed various magic, including the beautiful 『Fireworks』 magic that captivated people's hearts.
Perhaps because of his personality, even among the factions that are spread in my lord's domain, I've never heard any disturbing rumor like assassination's attempt, thanks to his cooking and personality as the lubricants."

Please stop the excessive praises. Poker Face-san is dying.

Moreover, leaving aside the Barondom and Gururian city. What do you mean by lubricant? Have I done something? Let's ask the detail from the viscount later. Were there really factions in that carefree duchy capital.

"If you really can change someone with your cooking like that, I'd like you to do something to that Marquis Ashinen."
"He might be unexpectedly changed you know? His cooking has mediated that Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku after all."
"What! Those two who are like cats and dogs?"

Which Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku are they talking about again?
Is it about the predecessors? The two people that I know should be in a really friendly term. They were always smiling after all.

The boy page came while bringing the smoked meat that I had presented on a plate. He had prepared cups for several people. Don't tell me we're going to drink in the broad daylight?

Contrary to his appearance, General Eltall is an affable person.

"W, what's this liquor? Chevalier Pendragon, where did you get this liquor? It's the first time I've drunk this liquor."
"It tastes like Toruma's treasured liquor huh, so that liquor was really

something you had brought."

Let's fabricate some story since I can't exactly tell them that it's something summoned by the black dragon's magic.

"That is something I obtained from a merchant called Heiron in the trade port of the dukedom. I heard that it was liquor from some distant land, so perhaps it's from the archipelago or another continent."

I don't know whether it's because they comprehend that excuse, or because my Deception skill is at work, but it seems they've consented. The story flows, and I've been made to promise to give the two another dragon spring liquor later.

If I can get along with the military top position in the place where I'm staying with just one bottle of liquor in ton unit, I've got my money's worth.

10-13. Courtesy Calls (2)

Satou's here. If humans don't have an objective, or rather a purpose, they can't quite work hard at it. Too grand of an objective will break your heart though, so it might be better if you have the short and the long terms objectives.

◇

"My my, bringing such wonderful presents like these, Muno Barondom is quite rich isn't it."

The madam of Marquise Ashinen is looking at the presents from me that are in front of her, [Silk Cloth], [Sapphire Necklace], and [Coral Works] with great delight. I originally wanted to only give her the necklace, but since Arisa suggested that presents would be better if there were a lot, I slightly added it. The coral works especially, Viscount Shimen's secretary secretly advised me that they have a lot of variety on top of being rare in the inland, so it would be easy for the madam to give them to her servants.

I've packed the gold nude woman statue that's for Marquis Ashinen and handed it to the butler. It would have been sold to some merchant if I just gave it to the madam after all.

The madam of marquis Ashinen is an obese woman on her late 30s. It seems the couple have four daughters and two sons, though they're not here. The children are around 10-18 years old, two of the daughters have been married at the duchy capital, and the eldest son is working on the royal castle. Thanks to the madam's machine-gun talks, I acquired various information about the Marquis' house, nobles and the wealthy living in the labyrinth city. I don't feel particularly tired taking the role of a listener since I've gotten used to it during the tea parties in the duchy capital.

"Mother, did you call me?"
"Ara, you're late. How about her higness?"

"O madam! What do you want me for?" <TLN: She calls herself with 'warawa', and as you might've guessed...>
"I'll introduce this person to your highness. He's--"

The two new people who have entered the room are the second 15 years old plump son of the marquis couple, and the foreign kingdom princess whom I saw when I was entering the labyrinth city. Unlike at that time, her hair is in proper drill twin tail style. The silver hair ornament suits her brown hair well. A maid-san with plain face who seems to be the princess attendant follows her from behind. I guess she's the fiancee of the marquis couple's second son.

With the madam's introduction, the second son snorted like he was looking down after hearing my peerage.

"Fuhn, what, he's just a honorary chevalier huh. Making me to specially greet a sham noble who sucks up to mother for her favor, how ludicrous. Can I go back to my room now?"

This second son is just the about same as the Marquis whom I directly met in the trade city back then. He's too straight, he should be more indirect with the insult even if the other party is a lower ranked noble.

"Geritz-dono, aren't you being rude to that person? In our kingdom, we will be acting a bit more respectful even if the other person is a lower ranked noble nanoja."

As for this princess, although her way of talking is strange, she's unexpectedly proper.
The second son quietly cursed the princess, "Acting so impudent despite being a girl" in mutter while leaving the room after getting the madam's permission.

The madam apologized for his remark instead of the person himself. Is she being overprotective?

The third and fourth daughter of the Marquis couple entered in exchange. Gona the third daughter is lightly obese, while Shina the fourth daughter is thin and underweight unlike her sister and mother. Her face also looks

somewhat different than the two. The older sister is still 12 years old, yet she's already been decided to marry into the house of a viscount who's their trusted retainer. Shina, the 10 years old little sister is still undecided due to her sickness.

"Excuse me."

The maid-san of the marquis's house came in while saying so. She's pushing a food trolley which has the Castella and blue tea that I've brought as presents.

"My, it's really an unusual cake isn't it?"
"It's soft."
"My, it's melting in my mouth.... What an elegant taste."
"It's a cake that the queen of a faraway elf kingdom eats, it's called Castella."

I'm not telling a lie. High elf-sama did stuff them into her mouth with great relish. Un, let's go and visit her with some castella later.

"As expected of the pastry of the large kingdom Shiga ja. Although the 『Hotcake』 from the other day was delicious, I have never eaten such delicious cake like this before. I also want to make my kingdom become able to have cakes like this freely available ja."

Glad that the princess-sama is also delighted.

The lightly obese third daughter-san has finished eating it in one go and is aiming for her little sister's plate, but it looks like she thinks it's improper in front of a guest, she doesn't seem like she'll make a move. I presented the one in my plate that I hadn't touched to her when the madam turned away her view for an instant.

"You eat it too Shina. It's sweet and delicious."
"Yes, mother."

The fourth daughter who has been urged by her mother cut a small piece of the yellow section of the castella and puts it into her mouth. After chewing it for a while, she leaks out a voice of admiration, "Delicious", that sounds like a cry. Her expression doesn't change, but her pale face has become

slightly reddish, so she's probably happy.

The madam asked my purpose for coming to the labyrinth city so I answered, "Explorer". The third and fourth daughters didn't seem to be particularly interested, but the princess bit it.

"Oh! You came here to become an explorer! That's good! I also came here to become an explorer noja. I will absolutely carve great deeds like your country's Ringrande-sama, and become the hero's companion noja."

As expected, I think it's impossible for the princess to become an explorer. Her level is only two, and she doesn't have any fighting skills. She only has the Etiquette skill.

Even though I'd like to tell her some things, for the time let's be polite and only said, "That's quite a wonderful dream."

◇

"I'm back."
"Welcome back, master. I have handed the baked sweets to the butler-san."

I come back to the inn with Lulu who's waiting on the carriage. I had asked Lulu to distribute baked sweets with a lot of honey to the maids. I learned from the duchy capital that I couldn't make light of the servants network, so I gave them extravagant baked sweets as a prior investment. I didn't give them Castella since Arisa advised me to differentiate it with the one for their master.

The carriage passed through the street of the wealthy heading toward the eastern Explorer Guild.

Arisa and the others are participating in a short course that the guild has sponsored. It seems the participation is free. I intend to have Arisa teaches me the content of the lecture later. This short course seems to have veteran explorers teach beginners various things like the way to conduct yourself in the labyrinth, and important characteristics of monsters, and it's held

regularly.

The short course is performed on the open space behind the guild. The lecture seems to be quite legit as they put out image of monsters to do it, though I don't know whether it's from light magic or nature magic.

Not only Arisa and the others, Jenna from back then and five other explorers, and also 40 children have also come. The children include both genders, but there doesn't seem to be any boy that's older than 10 years here.

Since it looks like the lecture is over, the staffs distribute wooden tags for participating. I wonder if that's like a completion certificate?

When I was gazing at that somehow, the receptionist lady from yesterday called me.

"Ara, Chevalier-sama. Your vassals took the lecture intently."

She seems to be carrying a large pot out of the guild building. It seems to be hot as she's using dish cloths to hold the pot. She puts the pot on the long table counter that has been prepared beforehand, and calls people who have participated in the lecture.

"We're distributing food. It's Selbira-style Stew today. Line up with your wooden tag."

I see, it's like a school's lunch program. The children who have gathered for the meal end up gaining knowledge about the labyrinth, and as the result, they will probably survive better when they explore the labyrinth. The guild must be expecting that in exchange for the food and personnel expenses, the losses of explorers will be decreased, and the number of the gathered magic cores will be increased, no doubt about it. However, since this course only opens once every five days, and the number of participants are limited, it seems that the children that can come are restricted.

The children received the poured stew with their wooden bowls, sat down on suitable places on the hall and began eating it.

"Master, thank you for your hard work."
"'Elcome~?"
"It's master and Lulu nanodesu!"

The three beastkin girls are also carrying wooden bowls with the stew in it. Since Pochi presents her spoon while saying, "Aan, nanodesu", I eat it. The saltiness is intense, but it seems to be stew with boiled scrap vegetables and some kind of meat inside. I've never tasted it before, but it's probably monster's meat. Frankly speaking, it doesn't taste good.

Although, the only one who has that impression seem to be only me, the children are eating the stew enthusiastically. The expressions on the beastkin girls look complicated, but they're eating them without any complaint.

Arisa, Nana, and Mia are still surrounding the female explorer lecturer and asking her with barrage of questions. Glad to see they're studying hard.

"Sir Pendragon. It has been a while."
"Nice to meet you Sir Pendragon. I am the friend of Gina, the daughter of Baron Keter, Heliona. I belong to 『Moonlight』 (party)."

Miss Heliona is a tall black-haired woman. Her hair is styled in bob cut, but there's a hair ornament with arranged feathers that make it looks like a peacock on her hair. She's wearing knight-like clothes and pants. Her breasts are small unlike Jenna, but she's a sexy girl with a nice waist line. The [Friend of the same town] that Gina has said in when we meet her is probably this person.

"Sir Pendragon. I'm sorry for my rudeness, but you should wear armor when you're entering the labyrinth. Even magicians wear leather armors before they enter the labyrinth. No matter how dexterous you are, we don't know if any surprise attack come from the surrounding. Don't be careless okay?"

Since Miss Heliona remonstrates me as a fellow explorer, I say my thanks and apology. Alas, we have become famous in the east guild due to a rumor about us getting kidnapped by the swarm of ants. It seems it was particularly known that it was an armor-less noble who entered the

labyrinth while bringing some maids along. She's probably avoiding calling me "Fool" instead of "Noble". We should better wear some dummy armors next time.

"By the way Sir Pendragon, I've heard that you have a mithril sword, could you please let me see it once?"

While being bewildered with miss Heliona complete change who's fidgeting like she's going to confess her love, I pass her the fairy sword from my waist.

"Could I draw it?"
"Please."
"What a beautiful sword. However, it's surprisingly light. Won't this make it hard when you fight against big monsters? I think for labyrinth it's better to have a spear or a pole arm as the main weapon, and a dagger as the side arm.
Sadly, most people commonly wear monsters-made armors in the labyrinth city, but don't you think that nobles should wear beautiful full-body silver armor? That beautiful silver! With that comes the power to crush evil--"

Looks like she's wearing metal armor and a pole axe when she's entering the labyrinth. It seems she will fights with dagger, the side arm, in a narrow passage. She seemed to like metal armor and had thoughtlessly recommended me to wear full body one. Since her talk is long, I ignore it halfway through, but it seems miss Jenna has gotten used to it as she's having a bitter smile.

Her passionate armor talk seemed to be continuing on still, but I took the chance when Arisa and the others came back and excused myself.

In the afternoon, I go to the firm that Sunifun-san, the merchant in Seryuu city, has told me and mail some letters toward Seryuu city. My letters are for the worker guild and Zena-san, Pochi and Tama are sending letter for the gate inn Yuni. It's as expensive as one silver coin a letter, but it's probably cheap considering how far the trip is.

After sending the letters, I go toward the [Mansion of Ivy] as scheduled.

10-14. Mansion of Ivy

Satou's here. Basements appeared a lot in mystery (works), but when I was in Japan, I had never even seen one. I wonder if it's really because of the problem with the law and tax that people build it above ground instead after all?

◇

I don't know the exact location of this Mansion of Ivy, but it's easy to look for it. When I used [Spirit Seer] skill as instructed by Mia, I could see one section of the labyrinth city where the spirits had gathered. After that it was as simple as marking it on the map, and going there via the shortest route.

The Mansion of Ivy is located in the northern side of the labyrinth city. It's to the west of the north gate, at the end of the wealthy area just before the pleasure quarter. There is a lush green park not far off the rampart, and the mansion of ivy exists there.

Just like the name implies, it's covered with ivy. The mansion is less than half as big compared to other mansions in this area of the wealthy, but the land size seems to be about as big. Transparent water is flowing in two meters wide moat outside the mansion hedges. Since there are low hedges outside the moat, it seems the moat is also part of the Mansion of Ivy. The clear water that flows in the moat seems to be flowing to the pond on the park via a small canal.

The area around here is slightly elevated several meters above compared to the neighborhood. The water that has flown to the pond seems to be flowing into the town through small waterways.

The carriage suddenly changes its course just before the Mansion of Ivy.

"What's wrong Lulu?"
"I'm sorry, I don't know why but I feel that I have to change the carriage's

course no matter what."

The log displays [『Forest of Hesitation (Return Home)』 magic is successfully resisted]. It seems to be some kind of people clearing magic.

"It seems that there's a magic under effect, so I will take only Mia along from here. Everyone wait here for a bit."

I tell so to everyone and go with Mia to the Mansion of Ivy.
Mia is acting normally, I wonder if this magic does not work on elves. Just in case, I pass the medallion from Giril to Mia.

There's an archway arbor with waist-height white trees that acts as the front gate. However, there's a moat that's full of water just beyond that gate, yet there is no bridge to cross it.

When I check with magic Perception, it seems that the low moat is under effect of space-based magic. According to Giril, the owner of this mansion is Trazayuya-shi, I wonder if he wanted to make a fortress? Or maybe the security in the area was so bad that you couldn't be at ease without doing this much.

『Gate, open, I am Misanalia of Boruenan Forest. Gatekeeper, Come here quickly.』

Mia read the phrase for opening the gate that's written on the back of the medallion. Even though Mia usually rarely talks, she sure is good at reciting lines isn't she.

A little girl was peeking on the opposite side of the main gate, and when our eyes met, she hid behind the gate. She's a House Fairy (Brownie). Her green hair that's nearly black is put in short ponytail.

『Gatekeeper, Come here quickly』

Yielding to the repeated lines of Mia, a bridge appears between the gates.
It's a transparent bridge that looks like a glass.

"Nn."

I grasp Mia's hand which she has presented, and we cross the bridge toghether.

"Misanalia-sama, I am the guard of this Mansion of Ivy, Leriril, Giril's granddaughter."
"Just call me Mia."
"I cannot do such thing. To call elf-sama with their nickname! Please call me Leriril without honorific."
"Nn, Leriril."

Giril was also like her, but compared to him Leriril looks far more child-like. From human's standpoint, she looks like a 6-7 years old child. By the way, she's a 60 years old girl. I feel like she'd be mad at me if I say Kanreki. Her level is quite high at 20. She has hiding skill and race-specific skills. She seems to be an expert of scouting and the like.

"By the way, Misanalia-sama, who is that human brat over there? A mere human being holding hands with the honorable elf-sama, how extremely rude of him. Let me teach him his position."

I got suddenly dissed during our first meeting.
The people in the elf hometown didn't discriminate against humans, but I wonder if she has come to hate humans after being surrounded by them? I wonder why, I somehow feel that I can't defend the humans.

"Rude. Satou is my fiance."
"Eh? Eeh? That's a joke right?"
"Mwu, officially approved by parents."
"Hahaha, that, that cannot be~"

Leriril waved both her hands round and round to deny Mia's fiance remark as it seemed to be shocking for her. She passed her limit when she heard about the approval of Mia's parents, she fainted.

◇

We can't exactly let her sleep here just like this, so we bring her to a tree shade and lay her on a sheet.

Sometimes refreshing cool breeze blows from the greeneries that exist due to the moat that surrounds the mansion ground. In the dusty labyrinth city, it's only here and the park surrounding it that feel like it's from another world.

"Ha, I saw a bad dream."
"Nn, dream?"
"Yes, an elf-sama was seduced by a human brat."

What a rude thing to say toward the youngster who had carried you to a tree shade and nursed you.
She gets up unsteadily, and looks toward Mia in a surprise. And then, she seemed to have sensed my presence, she turned toward me in an awkward robot-like movement. I'll leave out the uproar afterward, and just write down that it's quite difficult to deal with the little girl.

"Now then, Misanalia-sama and Satou, please come here."

Leriril who has finally concedes my existence leads us into the mansion. Arisa and the other who are waiting outside have been excluded from the effect of [Forest of Hesitation (Return Home)], and since I've called them with [Telephone], they will probably come here soon.

It seems the Medal of Proxy that Leriril carries can control the entrance bridge and the isolation magic. The Medal of Manager that Mia carries has higher authority than Leriril's medal.

"And, am I wrong to assume that Misanalia-sama is the new master of the Mansion of Ivy?"
"No. The master is Satou."
"Eh? That br-, Satou, is?"

Was she going to say brat?
Well, it's not wrong for an old woman on her 60 to call me brat though.

"Yeah, Giril told me to go ahead and use this mansion if I'm staying in

labyrinth city. That medal is also something that he has entrusted to me."
"Ceh, that senile old man.... No, from esteemed grandfather is it? I can't believe it."
"Mwu, fact."

No no, Leriril. You're too late for the retake. You've gone and said him as senile old man after all.

"Err, maybe grandfather was being senile, no his physical condition was bad at the time?"

This child really has a bad mouth.

"Satou is the benefactor of Boruenan Forest. A friend of Aze."
"By Aze, do you perhaps mean Aialize-sama the high elf? For a high elf-sama to show herself before a human! Moreover, friend is it? Even though high elf-sama is the heaven holy priest that can even be called a demi-god."

I'd have been fine if she falsify her as my lover. However, something like demi-god or heaven holy priest really, those are the most unsuitable names for Aialize-san.

"Yes, I've gotten along well with her. I have been taught Spirit Magic and Spirit Seer by her, and even taken to the observatory of the world tree."

After getting greatly shaken, Leriril fell on the floor and prostrated to beg forgiveness for her impoliteness. Moreover, she said, "I can't call you without honorifics if you're the friend of high elf-sama", and added [Sama] to call me. Afterward, she also calls other members with [Sama] since they're also Aialize-san's friends.

◇

"Misanalia-sama and everyone else too, please enter."

Guided by Leriril, we enter the mansion. The inside is of an extremely

normal mansion. There is a mirror at the end of a narrow passage that's located in one corner of the living room and hard to find.

She holds her medal out, and waves-like light appear on the surface of the mirror.

"Please follow me."

And then she jumps into the mirror. Oh, that looks like a mirror that could take you to another world, wait, this is already another world. According to the map, Leriril is 10 meters below the ground, so this is probably some kind of teleport gate. After confirming that, I also follow.

The space is awfully bright even though it's underground. The ceiling is also more than three meters high. This brightness is just like the outside. Most likely, there are plants with light fiber stalks like we have on the labyrinth villa's ceiling, or some kind of magic that transmit the light from outside here.

The place in five meters radius from here is like a courtyard, weeds that look like lawn are growing. When I confirm on the map, it seems the Mansion of Ivy occupies the same space as the park above underground. It's extended 30-50 meters underground. There are more than 100 rooms it seems. There are also workshops and facilities that Trazayuya-shi has used, I have to ask if I can use it later.

"Here is the main building of the Mansion of Ivy. The mansion on the ground above is a fake for visitors."
"He's quite the careful one."
"Trazayuya-sama was a gentleman that was called the elf sage. Esteemed grandfather has told me that sage-sama had a lot of magic tools and magic engineering inventions, and when sage-sama was inside the labyrinth, there were always thieves or nations that aimed for his assets."

I see, it's not because of paranoia, but self-defense huh.

"Even now, every time the viceroy is replaced, they always attack with armed groups trying to make this mansion into their possession."

Yet it doesn't fall, isn't that amazing?

"High level explorers should be able to break through it though?"
"Anyone who lives in this city absolutely won't attack the Mansion of Ivy."

Leriril declared so full of confidence toward Arisa's question.

"After all, the Fake Core of this mansion is the thing that maintains the water source of this city."
"Uwah, taking a hold of the lifeline huh, Trazayuya is good. As expected of sage-sama."

Leriril doesn't seem to know the detail, but the thing about Fake Core is written in the documents that he has left behind. According to it, it was a magic tool that preceded the Maze Core, and it was made using large amount of Philosopher's Stones. It seems to be a good system that can do various things like absorbing magic power from the Earth's Vein nearby, using preset functions, or supplying magic power into the magic tools that are connected to it.

In this case, it uses the function of the Fake Core to draw out the water from the underground water vein.

"However, in that case, isn't it bad if we live here?"
"That's right, it'll be fine if we're inside the mansion, but a mansion dweller who's wandering outside the mansion could become a hostage, we might get involved in various troubles~"

Arisa also agrees. However, I'd love to use the facilities here.

"What about buying a house outside and enter here from there? We can just use master's or my space magic to go in and out."
"You're right, let's go with that."

Let's ask about the dummy house from the marchioness or the general if there's one that's a good fit.
After having a tea party to get ourselves acquainted, we chose our rooms in the mansion, put the carved seal board, and then left toward the inn.

Additionally, the castella was quite popular with everyone.

10-15. Red Iron Plate

Satou's here. I wonder why is my free time decreasing every time I get a promotion. Well, it goes without saying that the causes are the slightly raised salary and the many more works I must do.

◇

"I'm very sorry."

The receptionist onee-san over the counter is deeply apologizing.
We've come here to receive the Bronze Plates, but--

"Actually the guildmaster has raised an objection for it."

--An interruption has come, and it seems our promotions have been stopped.

"Eh~, I'm firmly against this!"
"I'm truly very sorry. I'm told that the guildmaster has an objection on Sir Pendragon since something like this is unprecedented..."

I understand Arisa's dissatisfaction, but there's nothing can be done even if we press this person further.

"When will we know if our promotion is admitted or not? May we use these temporary plates until then?"
"Y, yes. You can have the temporary Bronze plates as they are now. I think it'll only take a few days at the longest, so it'd be helpful if you come to the guild in five days."

Right, we haven't registered our contact address to the guild.

While calming Arisa who's still discontent, we leave the guild. An onee-san around thirty who descends from a carriage that has just arrived as we

come out, calls me in fluster.

"U-um, excuse me, but are you Chevalier Pendragon-sama?"
"Yes, I am, can I help you?"
"I came for an errand from the guildmaster. I am Ushana the guildmaster's secretary. I'm sorry for being so sudden, but could you go with me to the west guild?"

Arisa is posing triumphantly while whispering, "The template is here" behind. I'm only planning to buy the dummy house today, so I don't mind visiting the guildmaster. I told her my consent, and we headed to the west guild together.

◇

A wand is coming toward me right in front of my eyes.

Sharp like a spear, it was suddenly thrust before my eyes when I opened the door. I lightly brush the attack that's even sharper than Liza's spear blow, avoiding it. The other party passes the eluded wand over the shoulder to the other hand, and attacks again. Is this what they call wand arts?

And then I continue to elude all of the ever-changing long wand attacks.
I wonder what does this person want to do anyway?

The one who stops this unreasonable attacks is the secretary, Ushana's words.

"Guildmaster! If you keep doing that any longer, Seberkea-sama will scold you!"
"Ceh, we were just in the good part. Right, Satou?"

Yes, the one who has been attacking me with the long wand since awhile ago is the guildmaster-san. Moreover, she's a 87 years old old woman, so I couldn't counterattack really. She's a level 52 magician who has fire and light magic skills. I want this childish old woman to take some lesson from Tenion head-miko.

I'm the only one who's come here. Arisa and the others are touring the guild hall below.

"Unfortunately, I'm not fond of getting surprise attacks."
"What, aren't you the battle freak who stayed overnights from the first day of his labyrinth diving, and then went on to collect more than 100 magic cores?"

How rude. I've only defeated 20-30 monsters at most.

"I was only watching from behind, my companions were the ones who actually fought."
"Bah, who would believe that nonsense. Even if that was the truth, it was because the monsters were small fries whom you did not need fight right?"

It's most likely just guessworks, but it's relatively true.
It seems she had felt that I was going to deceive her, she spoke first before I could.

"Moreover, that sword is something that old Dohar's created right? Like that old man would give the sword he made himself to a small fry. If you're going to deceive people, wrap that Truth Mark with some cloth."

I didn't specially hide the mark since no one at the duchy capital noticed it. I thought that it wasn't rare since I saw a lot of arms that had truth marks in the elf hometown, but it seems I was wrong.

"Elder Dohar is my drinking buddy."

I can't exactly tell her that I've made the sword together with elder Dohar.
I wonder why. The moment she heard "Drinking buddy" part, guildmaster's eyes lit up like a carnivore who had found its prey.

"Hou? Then, why don't I become your drinking buddy too?"
"Yes, if you're alright with me, I'll bring some liquor and appetizers."

It's troubling that she seems to be a battle mania, but I think of her like elder Dohar in the [Un-detestable Elderly] category. I would refuse if she

was going to manipulate me, but it'd seem that I could hear many interesting old stories if I drank with her.

"Very well, it's a banquet then!"
"You can't."

Ushana-san who had come back while bringing a shallow box denied the declaration of the guildmaster who looked happy. It's still noon after all.

"Please confer the guild plates here first. You can do the banquet afterward."
"Ceh. I know I know. Satou, receive these Red Iron Plates."

Hmm?　It should have been Bronze Plates though?

"Don't look so confused. That stiff viscount talked a lot about your achievements y'know?"

Come to think of it, Viscount Shimen was going here and there when he was trying to rescue me. Did he say something exaggerated during that time?

"Was it『The Hero of Muno City Defense War』and『Gururian City Demon Slayer』I guess?　A senior explorer from our guild was there right at that time, do you remember? There was a report from that guy too. Regardless of the fact that it was a low-class demon, we can't give the party that has defeated a demon unhurt with Wooden or Bronze Plates."
"That said, giving you Mithril Plates would be too much. If you had at least defeated a middle-class demon then."
"Humph, those guild council fools, it would have been a new record if they had just nodded, it was almost there y'know."

Apparently, the guildmaster was scheming to force the Mitrhil Plates on us. I thank you the good senses of the guild councils whom I've never seen in my mind. Even though it would have made Arisa happy, I feel that the disadvantages are too many.

Ushana-san explains about the Red Iron Plates. Of course it's not just me, everyone is going to be promoted to Red Iron Plates.
We've acquired it easily this time, but normally a Bronze explorer needs to

give the guild high-grade magic cores in long term to raise his status. It seems that one normally needs five to ten years to get it, this Red Iron Plate sounds trouble enough.

"Is it alright? We have only dived to the labyrinth once you know?"
"Guildmaster has authority to confer until the Red Iron Plates. We can't issue it excessively, but we haven't issued it even once in two years here, so the royal castle probably won't complain."

Ushana-san continues her talk, and it's come to the advantages of the Red Iron Plates. There are many small financial advantages like half-off for handling charges and building rents that involve the guild. I'm not too happy since I'm not in trouble financially at all.

"And finally, the most important point is--"

Please tell the most important thing in the beginning.

"--People who are holding this Red Iron Plates are treated like associate nobles. It can't grant noble privilege like Chevalier-sama has, but it guarantees the social position that equal the knights. Since this is guaranteed in the name of Shiga King, not only it is valid inside the kingdom, it's also valid even when you visit other countries."

Of course it's not only valid for humans, but also for demi-humans it seems. Looks like they can stay in the inn if they have the Red Iron Plates, even in the area where discriminations against demi-humans run deep like in Seryuu city.

I asked Ushana-san if it was alright for a non-government body to issue privileges of associate nobles.

"Even though the Explorer Guild call itself a guild, it's actually the managing body of the labyrinth resource ministry of Shiga Kingdom. The guildmaster holds the position of the labyrinth resource minister of Shiga Kingdom, and she's treated as an earl when she's in office, so there's no problem."

I see, so the kingdom is behind it after all. I thought that it was strange that they let civilians managed the money tree, but I understand now.

I asked her just in case, it seems people who held the Mitrhil Plate was not only treated as an associate noble like the people who had the Red Iron Plates, but they would be bestowed the honorary nobility peerages from the king.

"By the way Satou. About the banquet schedule, how about this evening."
"Yes, I'll make it open for it."
"Ouh, good answer. I happened to hear about this, that Eltall brat was boasting that he had just gotten himself some very fine liquor--"

Putting aside her calling general Eltall brat, the dragon spring liquor is too popular. I have to bring some goats as presents for Heiron the black dragon.

Don't tell me, she didn't do the unprecedented promotion to aim for the liquor right?

"W, what's with those eyes. It's nothing like that okay? The promotion got nothing to do with the liquor y'know?"

The flustered guildmaster was slightly suspicious, but since Ushana-san denied it, it was just a groundless suspicion, it seems.

Now then, I need to bring the Red Iron Plates to Arisa and the others who are waiting in excitements below.

10-16. Guild Disturbance

Satou's here. In the old dungeon-exploring games, you assemble your party in the bar, revive and release your curse in the temple, and getting ripped-off in stores.

◇

I explain the details regarding the circumstances and give the Red Iron Plates to Arisa and the others who are waiting downstairs.

"Yafuu! It's a promotion authorized straight by the guild master!"
"Okashiratsuki~?"
<TLN: Authorization: osumitsuki. Okashiratsuki: Fish dish served whole.>
"Its eyes are scary nodesu!"

Arisa exaggeratedly getting happy, she pushes her hands up and jumps. Tama, that's not right. Pochi is still scared at the eyes on the fish head that she said was looking at her. The two mimicked Arisa, jumped, and almost hit their heads on the ceiling. It's dangerous if you don't grasp your own physical prowess you know?

The other members look reserved, but it seems they're also happy.

"Keh, since when did Explorer Guild become children's playground?"

I guess we were too noisy?
I looked back and was going to apologize, but that intent disappeared immediately.

Since the man was kicking the children who were gathering near the entrance of the guild around. He wasn't talking about us, but the baggage carrier children who were occupying the entrance. This man looks familiar. If I'm not mistaken, he's the party leader of the male explorer party that were running from the ants.

The kicked children don't have serious injuries yet they can't move and fall limp on the guild's wall. Just like the tigerkin back then, how could big men like them kick children around.

"Violence against young organisms are dangerous, thus prohibited, so I tell. Warn them with words, so I recommend."
"What's with you bastard? Hou, aren't you quite the beauty. Don't you have the wrong job? You can make more money as a prostitute than an explorer y'know?"

The man's hands casually stretch toward Nana.
The armor that Nana usually wears has green silk in the interior layer, whale leather in the middle layer, and the armored newt leather on the outside. It looks like a soft leather armor from the outside, and although it is actually soft, the armored newt leather part harden when it's supplied with magic power.

It's the leather from a monster with [Armor] on its name. It can repel swords and spears used by normal soldiers.

What would happen to defenseless fingers that tried to grab her breasts. This man will learn the answer to that question with his body.

"Fi-fingers, my great fingers areee"

The man screamed like he was surprised, and crouched down on the floor.

"You bitch, what did you do to Besso"
"Enemy of Besso!"
"Denied. He has brought it upon himself, I report."

Those men seem to be friends of the crouching man. The faces of those two are red. Looks like they've been drinking liquor in daytime.
Those two did the unbelievable thing of drawing their swords inside the Explorer Guild, let alone th city.

Now then, guess I'll arrest them before anyone got hurt.
Liza drives her spear to the flank of the man, before I can step forward. Of

course it's not with the pointed tip part, but the blunt one, and lightly at that.

Liza was intending to do it lightly, but with a small sound, a hole was formed on the man's armor that seemed to be made from monster's shell, and he fainted after getting his abdomen hit hard. The poked man fainted in agony, and the other man beside him lost his balance and rolled on the floor.

『Oy, aren't those guys wearing ant shell armors?』
『B, breaking that so easily like that...』

The peanut gallery are saying something, but since this armor is far more brittle compared to the shell breastplates I've given to Kon's friends, it can't be helped if it breaks.

Besso who had his fingers bent picked up his friend's sword that had fallen to the ground and tried to attack Lulu.

I was closing on her like sliding to intercept him, but in the end, it was meaningless. Lulu easily evaded Besso's sword, and then pinned him down to the ground. Besoo who has been held down is resisting, but it's almost like there's no effect, maybe it's due to her level that's almost twice as high, or her self-defense skill.

『Maid-san is strooong』
『Did you see her movement just now?』
『Didn't Besso and his gangs win against the viceroy's soldiers who were three times their number at the bar back then?』
『If the maid-san is that strong, that means those runts are also strong...』

The remaining one has also been defeated by Tama and Pochi who are barehanded, he's groveling on the floor.

『Aren't those runts too strong?』
『Then those guys are the rumored beastkin children who easily opened the labyrinth gate?』
『That means, the two frail-looking children over there are also as strong?

』
『Unbelievable...』

The peanut gallery are noisy.

"Oy, I'll throw you to the guild dungeon if you're making too much rackets in the hall y'knooo~?!"

A heavily armored soldier with good physique who had come with a guild staff from the interior warned us. He ended his word strangely.

I felt like I had seen his face somewhere, so I tried to remember it. He's the explorer with a big shield who was downed by the demon in Gururian city.

『It's the Great Shield Gell.』
『He survived fighting a demon y'hear?』
『As expected of Iron Wall Gell.』

He rushed before me and asked.

"Excuse me, but aren't you Sir Pendragon?"
"Yes, we've met in Gururian city if I remember right."

He didn't seem to think that I would remember him.

"I can keep living like this thanks to Sir Pendragon who helped me."
"It's thanks to the hard works of my companions."

He's looking around for someone restlessly while thanking me.

"Ge, gell bro."

I remembered the existence of Besso after hearing his voice down below. I gesture Lulu to let him go.

"Ah, the daredevil who picked a quarrel with Sir Pendragon was you huh."

Gell treated Besso who came to cling on him coldly. Quite a difference in enthusiasm.

"You hear? Everyone hear me out! These people are experts who have defeated a demon that appeared in a city of a distant dukedom. Furthermore! They did not only defeat it. It was a complete victory! They defeated the demon without even suffering a single injury."

He talks passionately about how strong we were to the peanut gallery. He seemed to particularly remember about Pochi and Tama who took him to the safety zone, and thanked the two as his life saviors.

"By the way Sir Pendragon. Today, are you not together with the beautiful goddess who was fighting barehanded at that time?"

The one who was fighting barehanded at that time was only lady Karina. He's probably looking for lady Karina since a while ago.

"Yes, she has already returned to her territory."
"Territory is it?"
"Yes, she is the daughter of Baron Muno, Karina-sama."

Afterwards, Gell asked various things about lady Karina. While we're at it, I tell him about the shortage of soldier and knight of the territory army. I don't think that he will enter into government service, but explorers who have heard this story might want to go there out of curiosity.

◇

As a punishment for drawing out swords inside the guild hall, Besso and his gang are to reflect in the guild dungeon for three days, so Gell took them away. Liza used her spear too, but since it wasn't the pointed end but the blunt end, it was waived.

The children who were kicked looked like they would get some bruises, but they had gone outside before the staff could warn them.

"Isn't that macho dimwitted for calling that Karina a goddess?"
"Nn."

"Karina, strong~?"
"She's agile like, pyonpyon, nanodesu!"

Arisa and Mia have low assessment of lady Karina. Pochi and Tama tried to defend her, but since the point was wrong, they weren't really successful about it.

◇

Since we've come to the guild already, I decided to might as well sightsee the facilities here.
I'm being guided by Arisa and the others who have explored ahead of time.

First, let's go to the room where the contracted temple priests reside in the guild.

There are beautiful male and female priests to the point of me wanting to ask if they were selected by their looks. Looks like detoxification, curse dissolution, paralysis release, and healing the severely wounded person are free of charge. There's also life magicians who work as their assistants. Stopping bleeding and disinfecting wounds are probably their jobs.

There's also a place that sells labyrinth maps and information.

Looks like they're selling information about unknown areas, or unknown passages in an area here. It seems only Red Iron explorers and higher can buy and sell information here. Wooden and Bronze ones are to trade information and maps in front of the labyrinth.
There was a map of the first area and the areas that adjoin it pinned on the wall of this room, I only knew it after coming here. Even now, there is a man that seems to be a beginner explorer who's working hard to copy it.

There's also a curio store for explorers.

They're selling emergency goods like preserved food, sleeping bags, and bandages, there are also torches, monster-warding powder, flash balls, smoke balls, ropes, thin weed strings etc. Some unusual things include small

metal plates, and mirrors.
I'm wondering what they're used for, but it seems the metal plates are clappers for warning, and the mirrors are for checking enemies positions from the back.
The items in this store are of good quality, but since they're more expensive than the ones in the private-owned stores, the only people who buy here are the wealthy noble-borne explorers, it seems.

Of course, there is also a pharmacy that sells medicines and magic potions suited for explorers.
And, I heard something that sounded like a quarrel from that pharmacy.

10-17. Temporary Residence

Satou's here. The heavy responsibility of mortgage that you get when you're buying a house is often called one of the three trials of life. As such, buying 'my home' is a serious thing even in another world.

◇

"Anti-poison magic potion is out of stock?　Wait a minute, haven't some alchemy materials just arrived from the royal capital last week?"
"Yes, the guild exclusive alchemists had done their best to compound them, but the 『Fang of Conflagaration』 bought them all, saying that they were going to subdue the cockatrice."
"Ceh, those Red Iron Plate guys huh."

Real life cockatrice huh. I might want to see it for a bit.
However, people usually imagine cockatrice for its petrification, but it can use poison too huh.

"Therefore, I recommend going to the pharmacy or alchemist stores in the city..."
"Those stores are under the backing of the viceroy so they're twice as expensive as the guild store y'know. Hey, isn't there one left at least?"

The man still harasses her. The employee onee-san looks troubled.

"We have magic potions for spider poison or ant poison, but there is no general one left."
"I don't have the money to buy several kinds. Can't be helped, give me two spider poison magic potion, and also three low-rank healing potion."
"Yes, one low-rank antidote is two silver coins, and one low-rank healing potion is one silver coin."

It's quite cheap.

The male explorer pays it by lining up coins on the counter. Looks like he's not good with calculation.

"Next one please."
"Ah, excuse me. I wasn't actually queuing."

I lightly apologize for standing in a misleading place.

I asked if they would purchase medicines, but since they had exclusive pharmacists and alchemists already, they would only buy items that were in shortage.

"However, most of the items are in shortage. Medicinal plants won't grow on the outskirts of this city, and although we have alchemists and materials gathered from the labyrinth by the explorers, the consumption is too intense we're having chronic shortage."

Looks like the plentiful ones are only the ointment for stopping bleeding, and alcohol for disinfecting wounds. It seems that if you have magic potions that are in shortage with quality that's higher than a certain level, they would buy it at eight times the price the guild is selling.
When I took out the diluted magic potion for her to judge, it was worth four big copper coins.

"Even though the healing quantity barely qualifies, the stability is wonderful. This shouldn't go bad or deteriorate even while it's taken into the labyrinth."

Magic potions can spoil huh.
I have to check the magic potions in Arisa's Item Box, and everyone's Fairy Pouch (Magic Pouch) later.

That reminded me about the Dragon White Stones which I had brought a lot from Seryuu city, when I checked to her if I could sell it, she asked if they could buy it all instead.

When I was sending letters to Seryuu City the other day, I heard from some merchant that the shortest route, the northern route had been blocked, so they were going to the southern roundabout route which would take some

time, that was probably the cause.
Apparently, one of the city in Lesseu Earldom was destroyed by a rampaging mid-class demon, so it can't be helped that circulation of goods has been stopped.
<TLN: Referencing last Zena's intermission. Chapter 7 Intermission 2.>

"No that story is already settled since hero-sama has exterminated the demon, but--"
"Dragon?"

According to her, it seems that a dragon has nested in the mountain pass that's located in the Zetsu Earldom that's between Lesseu Earldom and the Royal Capital. As the result, the northern highway of the kingdom has been completely blocked, and the circulation of goods stops. That's bothersome.

"Since the Kingdom Conference will be held next month, the kingdom knights and even the Eight Shiga Swords-sama have been deployed to subjugate the dragon, so please bear with it for a while."

If I compare the two Shiga Eight Swords I've met in the duchy capital and Heiron the black dragon, I'm confident that the blockade will continue for a long while.

Well then, putting aside that situation, let's go back to the trade.

I took out a small bottle out of the magic bag, and put it on the counter.
There are 300 grams fine powder of dragon white stone inside. This small bottle can become material for making 30 antidotes.

She told me that they're buying it for 30 silver coins.
I bought 18 kilograms of small barrel for 10 gold coins back then. It has decreased to only 10 kilograms after I removed impurities and made it into fine powder, yet it can be sold for 20 times the initial cost.

The pharmacy onee-san seemed to misunderstand me who was slightly taken back from the excessive profit.

"I understand that it's impolite for an alchemist to only sell raw materials, but since the all-purpose antidotes are quick to be spoiled, we can't handle

it if you bring a lot of the finished goods."

Thus, when someone want to buy the all-purpose antidote, the guild exclusive alchemist will compound it for them.

I decided to sell two small bottles of the dragon white stone fine powder, and five diluted magic potions. I should tell the explorer from a while ago that the antidote might be back in stock if I meet him again.

◇

"These are the three mansions that meet Chevalier-sama's request."

The male guild staff that handles real estate points at the labyrinth city map to present them.

They are a workshop in the craftsman district, a mansion in the wealthy area, and a mansion with a ranch and a farm nearby. He told me that the mansion with the ranch nearby had been vacant for nearly 10 years, so it would need some repair.

After thinking about it for a bit, I chose the mansion near the ranch since it would be easy to stock vegetables and dairy products then.

Arisa harshly said, "I can't believe you bought a house without even seeing it." but it was meaningless to worry about the condition of a dummy house anyway, so I decided to quickly buy it. I can just buy a replacement if I don't like it.

It was reasonably priced at half the market price, 150 gold coins, but due to the intervention of the guildmaster who appeared out of nowhere, it was became further half of that.
The reason that this mansion is relatively expensive for its location is because it's constructed with woods architecture which is rare in this labyrinth city. A collector would have jumped on this, but since the repair cost was high, there was no buyer.

The annual tax is 15 gold coins considering the structure and the location of the mansion. I'm told that Red Iron Plate possessor can also pay half the price of the tax. Since the discount only applies to one house, there doesn't seem to be any explorer who owns multiple houses.

In exchange for the gold coins I've taken out of the magic bag, I receive the registration documents for the mansion, and a bunch of keys. A person who had Contract skill came for the registration process.

◇

We go out of the guild building since I've finished my business in the guild. There, eyes full of expectation from the children are looking at us.

It's a bit scary.

Lead by the little girls baggage carrier from before, there are 30-40 children looking at us in the surrounding. Beyond them, the stalls owners seem to be also watching here. I see, so they clogged the guild entrance to the point of getting kicked by the explorer from before because they gathered for the possibility of being treated to meal huh.

No one is saying anything, but the sound of the growling stomaches of the children fill the tense atmosphere.
It'll be annoying if they keep like this so I guess I'll treat them.

I give some small changes to Arisa and the others, and ask them to treat the children with some meals.

"Now then, little girls! Chevalier Pendragon will treat you to a meal. Everyone thank him!"
"""Thank you, Chevalier-sama."""

I wave my hand to reply the gratitude of the great number of little girls, and the few boys.

"Meat~?"

"Arisa, meat are nice nodesu!"
"The nutrition will be imbalanced like that, so no. Let's make it something like stir-fried vegetables that's filling for the stomach."

The middle-aged men of the stalls raise their sales voices toward Arisa and the others who are discussing which dishes.

"Li'l lady-chan, our porridge has vegetables and meat inside, so it's filling for ta' stomach y'know?"
"What're you saying, our dumpling soup is the best. There's vegetables inside too, and our meat dumplings 'ere the most filling~"
"Awright, let's go with both!　Everyone, line up on the one you like!　You'll only be treated to one of them."

From the word of Arisa who feels too bothersome to choose, the children's eyes are wandering between the two stalls. In the end, they seemed to think that they will miss the meal if they were late, so when one of the children queued, two lines were immediately formed. Pochi and Tama are standing in a row to prevent the chaotic children blocking the traffic.

After saying good bye to the children who had become full, we went to the house I had just purchased.

◇

"Ugeh, it's weed everywhere."
"Leave it to me~?"
"Equipping mowing equipment nanodesu!"

Arisa leaks out her complaint in front of the mansion that's overgrown with weed. Tama and Pochi are posing with the sickles they've taken from the pouches, on their hands. Nana also takes out a long sickle. They've also been like this on the highway before, these three really like mowing huh.

I insert a key to the big padlock on the mansion gate. It's slightly rusted, but it can be opened with force.

Now then, there are about five children in the mansion, or to be exact, behind the private stable on the mansion plot. They're most likely orphans who are staying in the vacant house illegally. Their levels are low, I'll instruct Nana and the others to look at them while they're mowing.

"Nana, take Pochi and Tama to investigate the stable."
"Yes, master."
"Roger～"
"Nanodesu!"

The three make their way through the weed to the stable while making a path.
The remaining ones, that were us, decided check the water well. Arisa skillfully mowed the weed along the way with space magic.

The block for hanging the well bucket has rotted, its wreckage is lying on the floor. There is a bucket with rope beside the lid that covers the well to prevent trash from entering it. That bucket is slightly wet. The orphans just now are probably using it.

"This's baad"
"It's bad nanodesu!"
"Emergency, so I report!　A life is in peril. I wish urgent relief as soon as possible."

The three who've gone to the stable rush back here.
Apparently, the orphans are not merely illegal residents, it seems.

10-18. Temporary Residence (2)

Satou's here. A long time ago, my aunt couple moved into the detached building of my grandfather's house, so I had helped the clean-up. I did the rare experiences of exchanging tatamis, and replacing shoji papers.

◇

Led by the three, I've come to behind the stable where five 10-13 years old children have sat down.

It's a bit late, but I check their details now. The map indicators default to only show races and levels. Even during extended search, it normally only shows Name, Race, Age, Gender, and Level. As for the people who are antagonistic, or have crime, they are classified in red color, while people who have unknown skills or level 50 and higher are in blue. I've adjusted like so since having too many indicators narrows the viewing field.

The ones over there are exactly according to the information, children. However, they seem to haven't eaten for a long time, they've been debilitated to dangerous degrees. Judging from the well earlier, they probably haven't drank enough water either. Their consciousness seem to be muddy, only one of them react to our presents. That child doesn't seem to be moving either.

I give the nutrient supplements that I've used at Puta town back then to these children. Moreover, I heal their wounds one by one with magic healing. Every one of the child have wounds that are bordering at turning into gangrene from bone fractures on their limbs, the lacerations are awful. There was a child with some malformed bone from the bone fracture, but I was able to correct it by diligently applying magic healing.

"How is it?"
"Ah, their life are not in danger for the time being. I've healed them by forcing them to swallow the medicines, so they're sleeping from the

tiredness. After some time, give them some water and the nutrient supplements again. They should be fine after we give them light rice porridge tomorrow morning."
"As expected of master. Unrestrained praises are overflowing!"
"I'm glad~" "Nodesu!"

I'll leave Nana to nurse these children.
I felt sorry if I left them sleep on the ground like that, so I spread out the felt that we usually used in camping grounds, put a soft sheet on top of it, and laid them down on it.

◇

"Spiderwebs~?"
"It's sticky, nodesu."
"Satou."

Mia who's covered in spiderweb, and Pochi who's also in the same state with her ears flopping down are in tears.

That's why I said to let me go first.

The result of checking the inside of the mansion; besides one section of the floor that has rotted, everything else is only covered in spiderwebs, so we should be able to do something about it.

Since there were a lot of junks like broken chairs that are left behind, I put them into the storage in the trash folder. It was easy with the combination of [Magic Hand] techniques.

It's a two-story building which also has an attic and a basement. The area are around 60 tsubos excluding the attic and the basement, it's about twice as large as an average Japanese house. The basement was camouflaged as a wine cellar, but there was a cleverly hidden door, and behind the door was a room fully loaded with machines for a specific fetish, I wasn't sure how to handle it. Since it would be bad for the education of the youth troupe, I destroyed it like 'crack' and made it into a vacant room. Let's make a

dummy laboratory here later.
<TLN: Tsubo=
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_units_of_measurement#Area >

There are two separate buildings for visitors who are staying and for servants besides the main building on the plot. The visitor building is a two-story one like the main building, while the servants building is a bungalow. Each of them has around 45 tsubos floor space. There are only six rooms in the visitor building, but there are 10 spacious rooms and five narrow rooms in the servant building despite them having the same floor spaces.

Only the main building has a dining room. There isn't any bath, maybe because water is precious. Let's break one room in the first floor and turn it into a bathroom. Black splinters and ashes that look to be from coals are gathered in the stove in the kitchen.

"It's quite wide huh. How long will it take to make this habitable?"
"We should be able to make it in five days if it's just us maybe?"

Lulu tilts her head while replying to Arisa's fed up words.

"Lulu, as expected it's impossible for just us five to clean such a wide area like this. Master, how about letting the children that you've treated this morning help? If it's just miscellaneous works like weeding or wiping things with a cloth, they should be able to do it even without any skill."
"You're right, let's do that. Liza and Arisa, hire the children in front of the west guild, the rewards are one penny and a dinner. I guess 10 children should be enough? You can increase or decrease it as you want, I'll leave it to you two."

I accepted Liza's proposal, and asked them to hire more manpowers.

"Satou."
"What is it, Mia."

Mia pulls my sleeves from behind. She said that she wanted to go to the Mansion of Ivy, so we teleported to the carved seal board that had been put in the Ivy Mansion's hall for emergency. Since Pochi and Tama are still mowing the weed in the garden, Lulu stays behind in the mansion.

◇

"Leriril, cleaning."
"Misanalia-sama, to this abandoned house?"
"Nn."

Mia's business was about taking this Leriril here. She certainly has the [Cleaning] skill. She's a house fairy (Brownie) after all.

"Satou."
"What is it?"
"Become beautiful."

I didn't understand what Mia wanted for an instant, but I immediately realized it. She probably wants me to release the spirit light that I usually suppress. I don't really understand, but she probably has something in mind. I release it just like she asks.

"Nn, beautiful."

Leriril looked surprised, but Mia urged her to use magic.

"■■■■■■ ■■ …… ■■■■■■ House Cleaning."

After the long chant is over, the indoor becomes sparkling clean. I lift my foot out of curiosity as to what kind of magic is it, but the place where my foot is has also become clean.

>[Spirit Magic: House Fairy Skill Acquired]

Spirit magic type huh. Even though Leriril doesn't seem like she can see spirits, she can use spirit magic it seems. From Lua-san's talk, it seems that you can use the magic once you have Spirit Seer (skill), I wonder if Leriril got it from her race trait, or gift?

"You're great."

"I am grateful for the praise... However, I feel that the magic is more effective than usual."
"Nn."

The effect has increased probably thanks to the spirits that I've gathered, but since Mia doesn't look like she wants to explain it, I keep silent. It'll be boorish of me to do that if she's going to tell it as a surprise later.

Lulu rushes here from the kitchen with pitter-patter.

"Master, the floor suddenly sparkles! Ara? Lirerel-chan, welcome."
"Hey little girl! I've already said that I'm Leriril!"
"Ara, I've said that I'm Lulu, not little girl right. Have you already forgotten?"

These two don't get along well somehow. Leriril is like this with anyone but Mia, but it's rare for the gentle Lulu to talk in belligerent manner. According to Arisa, the reason was because of Leriril's impolite remarks to me, she said, "They'll probably get along well before long" optimistically.

"Next."
"P, please wait Misanalia-sama. Unlike elves-sama, our magic power are not much. Most of it has been used up for the magic earlier, so I cannot use big magic for a while."
"Nn, Satou."

After seeing Leriril who appeals with troubled face, Mia calls me. She probably wants me to use [Magic Power Transfer] to restore Leriril's MP. I restore her magic power as requested. Her magic power is certainly little compared to her level. It's even less than Lulu's when she's at the same level as her. I can't compare it unconditionally though since Arisa has twice the magic power of Lulu at the same level.

"Eh? Just now what? Did you do something? br-... Satou, sama."
"Mia requested it. I transfered my magic power to you."

Leriril murmured "Transfered magic power?" while looking perplexed, but, urged by Mia, she used various magic like [<<Clean-up House>>] and [Heal House], which made me want to quip, and made the house looks brand-

new.

It's quite great.
However, I feel like I can't understand the fact that the floor that should have been rotted, and the wall that should have holes have been fixed--although it's not like I don't understand if I think of it as healing magic, house version.

I stopped Leriril who was going to clean the outside of the house, and left the outside dirty as it was.

"The roof leaks are troubling, but please leave the dirt intact. Since they don't seem to be common magics, it would make the neighboring people surprised."
"I can't comprehend what the human said. Even Misanalia-sama will certainly have a hard time."
"Nn."

Leaving aside Leriril's rude remark, shouldn't you deny it and ask her to keep the dirt instead of agreeing with her?
Nevertheless, Leriril completely cleaned and repaired every buildings according to my request.

I prepared a simple bedding in the first floor of the main building, and moved the debilitated children there. The skin of the children looked slightly reddish, so I cleaned them with [Soft Wash] and [Dry], and then let them sleep on the bed. I give Nana change of clothes for these children and ask her to change their clothes.

◇

"Alright, we'ree heree."

Liza who's riding the horse, and Arisa who's sitting behind her have come back while leading around 20 children. Half of them are humans, while the rest are beastkins like ratkins, and rabbitkins.

"Welcome back, you're faster than I thought."
"Well yeah, still, aren't Pochi and Tama too diligent. There isn't any place where the children need to mow is it?"

I understand Arisa who's looking tired. The two have already mowed 80% of the weed on this wide plot.

"The small children are to wear gloves and baskets, and then gather the mowed weed into the basket! The big children are to wear gloves and grass sickles, and then cut the weed around the mansion! If you can finish it by the evening, Chevalier-sama will treat you to a delicious dinner!"

The children cheered in joy toward Arisa who cited the reward to keep their motivations up, and began to work.

"Ara? Isn't it Leriril. Since this child is here, that means the inside of the houses have been cleaned?"
"Arisa-dono, 'please stop calling me 'this child'', I've already said that much right!"
"Ah, sorry sorry."

While dodging Leriril's protest, Arisa opens the door to the mansion.

"Leriril good job! As expected of house fairy (brownie)! I'm astonished."

Arisa looks back with a gesture and heartily praises Leriril. Leriril seems to have a personality that's easy to get taken by the flow, she pridefully pushes her flat chest from the praise.

I send Leriril back with teleport magic since she can't be away from the Mansion of Ivy for long. We can just call her back for dinner.

The mowing is safely finished by the evening, and I give one penny for each children and treat them to a dinner as promised. I've decided to serve the meal in emergency-like lunch plates since there are no tables or chairs. Inside the lunch plate, I've put Gnocchi plastered with salty-sweet sauce and lightly boiled vegetables, salted potatoes, sweetened carrots, and the main menu is the diced wolf meat steak. I've made beans cuisine as Mia's main menu. Mia is still weak against [The Meat Dish] even now.

"Smell nice~"
"Un, I wonder what's that red thing? It smells sweet."
"That is meat. A lot of it."
"I wonder if we we will get it?"
"I'm hungry."

Since the children were only surrounding from a distance without taking the lunch plates, Arisa ordered them to line up. Since I've put priority into making the easy-to-make dishes, it shouldn't be that luxurious.

The children who have received the lunch plate begin to eat it in a rush. There are children who jam the food until they can't put it into their mouth anymore, there are also children who eat bite by bite to savor the taste. Strangely, there isn't anyone who say their impression about the taste. Everyone is too desperately eating it, they don't seem to have any room left to talk. However, I wonder if it's the default to have some children who eat while crying? Please eat it normally.

"Lulu has really improved her skill~"
"It's mortifying to say this, but this is delicious. To be inferior at cooking than humans, this is a matter of my dignity as a house fairy. The cooking skill of Arisa-dono's big sister is strange."
"Ara, Leriril. Our master is even better you know?"
"That br-, Satou-dono?"
"The castella from yesterday was made by master after all~"

Leriril whom we have called for dinner is eating beside Arisa. These two strangely get along well. I'd like her to get along with Lulu like that too.

The little children are licking their plates like they don't want to part with it after they've finished eating, so I slightly divide the meatful stir-fried vegetables I've made for the beastkin girls and give it to them. Every child looks like they'll eat anything presented to them, I stop them before they get stomach aches. Since Pochi and Tama look like they haven't had enough, I'll make them some late-night snack later.

10-19. Manager of the Mansion

Satou's here. Some kind of magazine wrote that if you're attracted to the word 'widow', that's the proof of being an old man. Although nowadays there are a lot of people who have divorced before they're separated by death, or people who become a single mother without a marriage, so it's no longer a familiar word.

◇

"Then, take care there."

I see Arisa and the others off in front of the west gate. Everyone is going to the villa in the labyrinth. I'm staying behind in order to find a manager for the mansion. Moreover, Nana is also staying since we can't just leave the debilitated children from before.

I remain until everyone disappear behind the gate, and then I head toward the Explorer Guild.

I was invited to a drink by the guild master after dinner last night, but maybe the guild was open for 28 hours as there were a lot of staffs and explorers despite being late at night. High level explorers and senior staffs who sensed the presence of a high-class liquor came to visit the guildmaster's room and demanded it, the dragon spring liquor that I had presented to the guildmaster disappeared in an instant. I overlooked the Brownie Wine that the guildmaster had hidden in the shelf out of samurai's compassion.

Maybe due to the party last night, I feel that there are only a few staffs.

I'm heading to the real estate department which referred the mansion yesterday. The young man from yesterday isn't there, instead, an old man with receded head hair is standing by while looking bored.

"Hello."
"Welcome to the guild real estate department."

He seems to be a more amiable person than I thought.

"It's about the mansion that this department has referred me yesterday."
"Does it have any inconvenience?"
"No, I'm looking for someone that could house-sit the mansion and stable hands for taking care of the horses, do you have any intercession department in mind that could help me."
"This Explorer Guild can be intercession that can find you guard or someone that will do odd-chores in your mansion, but it's better for you to look for someone you can trust to do something like house-sitting."

Does this person hate explorers despite being a staff of Explorer Guild?

"Yes, of course I won't say that all explorers cannot be trusted, but it's also the fact that there are a lot of them who can't resist temptations before their eyes. For house-sitting, I think you'd better off asking your noble acquaintances to introduce you to someone, or hire a slave if you want it quick."

Noble acquaintance, the first who pops up in my mind is Viscount Shimen. I don't know if he's still in the labyrinth city, but I try searching the wealthy area since he should be there. Unexpectedly, he's also in the same explorer guild. Come to think of it, he said that he was buying magic cores. The east guild should be the center for magic cores trading, but I guess the west guild is in charge of it?

Since his subordinate is waiting outside, I ask him for a meeting with the viscount.

◇

"Master, my name is Miteruna. I will do my best to serve under you despite my lack of ability, please take care of me."
"Please take care of me too."

The one who has politely greeted me is Ms. Miteruna whom Viscount Shimen has introduced for becoming the manager of the mansion. She's of human race, 26 years old, she can't be said to be beautiful, but her proportion is very slender. Although her stretched spine has a certain charm, her breasts-to-waist line is too straight. Her height is around 160cm, her long reddish light brown hair is knitted. Her reddish brown eyes are under her thin brows.
Her level is low at 7, and she has [Etiquette], [Service], and [Negotiation] skills.

Viscount Shimen immediately introduced her to me when I consulted to him. She's the eldest daughter of Viscount Shimen's villa manager family in this labyrinth city that has been doing it for generations. Her married brother seems to be current manager of the villa, so she's the so called excess personnel.
She was originally hired by the baronet by the viscount's referral, but she was relieved of her duty after she refused the baronet who was going to sexually harass her. I tried searching the city for a bit, and the only baronet in this labyrinth city is Baronet Dyuker. It's not like it's definite that he's a sexual harasser, but let's keep Nana and Lulu from getting close to the baronet.

"Rest assured, I'm the only man there. If I'm going to do something rude when I'm drunk, I don't mind if you hit me with nearby vases or chairs."
"No, I wouldn't do such thing."

I don't think I'd do something like that though, since I have a body that can't get drunk.
The cab carriage that we're riding has returned to in front of the Explorer Guild. I've come here to hire one or two children to become maids that will take care of the debilitated children in addition to the manager.

"Is it really alright for me to choose them?"
"Yeah, of course."

I nod to her question. The employment is going to be temporary anyway, and she's the one who's going to work with them.
She got off the cab carriage and came back bringing two older children

whom she had chosen. The two girls look like some naive middle schoolers.

"He is Pendragon-sama who is your employer."
"I'm Roji."
"I'm Annie!"

The second girl who greets me in full spirit looks familiar. She was one of the children who came to the mansion to mow weed. She seems to be remembering the dinner yesterday, her slackened face looks like it's going to drool, Miteruna scolds her because of it. The first girl has dark skin, I don't know if it's tan, or if she's of different race. Either way, her limbs are thin like they're going to break.

The cab carriage can only hold two people, so the two girls are walking to the mansion on foot. They should be alright since it's only 30 minutes walk away.

I explain the facilities in the mansion to Ms. Miteruna. That said, since I only just bought it yesterday, it was over after I only showed the kitchen, the water well, the food storehouse, the toilet, the shed, and the stable.
I'm planning to have the rooms in the second floor of the main building for my party members' private uses. While at it, I also instructed her not to enter the basement since I'm going to use it for my study and also research room.

"It's a wonderful mansion. This is the first time I've seen one that has been so thoroughly cleaned and maintained. The previous master must be experienced."

I'm sorry for the Ms. Miteruna who's being astonished, but it was cleaned with Leriril's magic. Let's not say it out loud since she's admiring it and all.

I pass a small bag that contains some silver coins and gold coins to Ms. Miteruna. She's probably going to need some cash for buying fuel, miscellaneous goods and groceries.

"Umm, master. In case of noble mansion, it's possible to buy stuff with tabs, so there is no need to deposit such large amount of money to the employees like this."

Come to think of it, they were also using tabs for buying stuff in the duchy capital. Although she said 'large amount of money', it was only around 10 gold coins anyway, so I left it to her.

After Roji and Annie have arrived, Nana and I leave. It'd be troubling for me if they see us off, so I told them not to.

We teleported to the labyrinth behind the stable.

◇

"Go~ Ryu~" Nanodesu!"

Arisa and the othes arrived slightly late after Nana and I teleported into the villa. I receive Pochi and Tama who are behaving like spoiled kids and spin them around.

"Phew~ Teleporting this many people is tiring."
"Arisa great."

Mia is patting the head of Arisa who's acting like some kind of an old man, sitting down on the stump chair.

Arisa and the others were hunting in area 4 when I contacted them, so they joined late.

"Master, how is the issue?"
"Ah, I've employed a good person out of viscount Shimen's referral. She's a dependable looking woman on her late 20s."
"Is she married?"
"She seems to be a widow."
"Oh! The widow manager is here!"

I was telling Liza and Lulu about Ms. Miteruna, but Arisa was getting spirited up from [Widow] word.

"A bamboo broom, and an apron with chick pattern are the default aren't they."

No, although I understand the reference.
<TLN: Maison Ikkoku.>

"It just needs an old dog, but I've never seen any dog after we've arrived in the labyrinth city."

Pochi points at herself, but Arisa shakes her head of course.

"Arisa, I'm sorry to pour cold water on your excitement, but Ms. Miteruna is extremely slender."

Arisa was blanked for a moment, but then her tension subsided like she understood what I mean.

◇

Nana blocks with her shield, while Liza shoots down the corns that are shot like a machine gun. I caught all the corns that were going to fly away behind with [Magic Hands]. These corns that are shot by the Walking Corn have hard shells, yet the inside are edible. There was no [~resisted the poison] on the log when I tried to eat it, so it's probably not poisonous.

Looks like Pochi has exterminated the monster this time. Her Heavy Blow skill has quite powered up ever since she learned Flickering Movement skill. She could possibly match Liza's blow after she becomes an adult, and her physique grows.

"Smells nice~?"
"Are you making something nodesu?"
"Hmm? I made pancake like thing since this seemed like corns."

"Mou, please stop making dishes behind people who are fighting. Our stomaches would ring."
"Nn, it rang."

I cut some slices, put maple syrup on it, and split it to everyone. It's a bit of snack.
Even though it looks like I could extract vanilla from the the Crawling Aroma Column (Vanilla Stalk) monster that we have defeated before this Walking Corn, I don't know how to do it so I'm hoarding it in the storage for the time being. If I can get my hand on vanilla, I can make more varied snacks. Vanilla Stalk was quite a powerful monster that could use Charm.

"Delish~"
"My cheeks are melting nodesu!"

It's not really fluffy, I should add some baking soda next time.

"Give me a bit more maple."
"Nn."
"Mou, I don't care if you two get fat."

Arisa and Mia ask Lulu who's in charge of maple syrup for more. I nod to Lulu who's looking at me with troubled face. It shouldn't have that much calorie if I'm not mistaken.

"Master, did you make this from the yellow beads of the monster from just before?"
"That's right. I make powder from that beads, and then add various things like eggs and sugar."

Nana is looking at the chick pattern that I've added on the back of the pancake. Since Arisa talked about chick apron just now, I made some adjustment to the heating magic tool, adding chick-patterned grilling surface on it.

"Master, this branding is peerless and wonderful. I recommend protecting it."
"I'll bake you some again later, so eat it."

Since Pochi and Tama seem to want second helping, I divide my share and give them half each. When I called them, they ran to me while having their mouths open, urging, so I cut big slices of the pancake and put it into their

mouths.

Mia and Arisa mimicked them, opening their small mouths, but since my plate had been emptied, I threw candies into their mouth instead.

Now then, the reason why we can have snack time in the labyrinth is because the enemies are few. I thought that monsters would increase in the past few days, but only monsters around level 10 multiplied.

We have to trail-blaze into a new hunting ground to fight efficiently it seems.

10-20. New Hunting Ground

Satou's here. In net games like MMO, searching for a delicious hunting ground is one of its real thrill. Although with the growth of information exchanges on the internet nowadays, that joy only last several days after the update.

◇

When everyone was sleeping in the labyrinth villa, I went back to the mansion alone to check the situation, but there wasn't anything of note in particular. The children also seem to be healing nicely. I give nutrient supplements for to Ms. Miteruna.

Since Ms. Miteruna asked about greeting cards, I've decided to send it to not only for people in this city, but also for Nina-san in Muno barondom. I wanted to send the greeting cards to my acquaintances in the duchy capital and Bollhart too, but since there were too many people, I'll write to them when I have some free time.

I tell her that I'm going again until tomorrow morning, and head back to the labyrinth.
She asked me about my destination, but I ambiguously said that it was some minor business. During the tea parties in duchy capital, I heard that young nobles usually used such excuse when they were visiting women, so I imitated it.

◇

"New hunting ground?"
"Yeah, if we keep this up, the enemies in this area would likely die out tomorrow. Judging from the map, area 74 or area 109 look good. Area 74 is

filled with amphibians and reptiles, area 109 is with insects."
"am-phi-bians?"
"What kind of monsters are they nanodesu?"
"Amphibians are like frogs. Reptiles are like snakes or lizards I guess."

There are cockatrices in area 69 that adjoins area 109. These monsters have high levels, there's even one at level 50. There are also high level basilisks in area 77 which neighbors area 74, it seems. Looking at the courses, the reason why there are a lot of monsters in area 74 and 109 is probably because the cockatrices and the basilisk are repulsing the explorers, so they can't go further in.

"There are many insects type monsters which have hard shells, so defeating them will take some time. I think area 74 with the amphibians and reptiles monsters is better here."

Liza suggests so with stiff face, but I didn't miss the glint in her eyes when she heard about the frogs. Pochi and Tama look happy about it, and the other members don't seem to object. If I'm not mistaken, a party called [Fang of Conflagration] was going to subjugate the cockatrices, so we can also avoid them if we go to area 74.

Let's pick a course where we won't encounter the explorers along the way as much as possible. If we're about to bump with one, I can just carry Nana and fly to the ceiling with Sky Drive, and we probably won't get find out.

◇

"The corner over there~"
"Monsters are hiding nodesu."
"Wait a minute, I'll check the surrounding with space grasp magic--there are three Maze Centipedes. One of them is on the ceiling so be careful."
"I'll illuminate the ceiling with my light drop, so Mia-chan, fell it with your bow okay."
"Nn."
"Nana, provoke it."
"You centipedes! Don't think you're great just because you have a lot of legs,

so I declare!"

I don't think centipedes have that in their minds.

One of the two centipedes that appear from the shadow due to Nana's provocation gets dropped to the ground by Liza's spear. Right after that, Pochi cuts off the centipede's head with her short magic sword.

Lulu illuminates the centipede that's on the ceiling with her light drop. An arrow that's shot by Mia with her small bow pierces the gap between the centipede's crust. Lulu is holding a magic gun on the other hand that's not holding the light drop, she skilfully shoots the roots of the centipede's legs. Lulu's marksmanships has become quite good.

Nana blocks the charging centipede with her great shield. The centipede vigorously climbed the great shield that it had rammed into and tried to attack, but Nana penetrates its head with her large sword from below. Furthermore Nana recites the Command Word [Tear] to activate the magic sword's special function, rupturing the centipede's head.

This [Tear] is a new feature that I've just experimented. I've put on thin membrane of force on the surface of the sword which will snap out with the command word. Since the eruption itself doesn't contain much power, I created the membrane to be in fine threads to increase its killing power, making it tear through the enemy's body from inside. Compared to [Shell], there seems to be a few situations where this can be used since if the enemy is soft, you'd be better off slashing with the sword normally.

The only one who didn't fight the centipedes, Tama, was dealing with the Goblin Assassin that was sneaking from behind. This monster is an assassin-type demi goblin that sneaks up from the shadow in narrow passages, they will launch surprise attacks from behind if you're careless. Even though their levels are only around 3-5, it seems 30% of explorers' deaths annually are caused by these Goblin Assassins.

"I guess it's around White 7 Vermilion 3? There's rarely any Red-grade magic cores like in area 17 huh."

Arisa is complaining while lighting the centipede cores with a light drop.

From all the experience so far, it seems that the older the monster, the deeper the color of the magic core tends to become. And it seems that the higher the level, the bigger its magic core becomes.

◇

Along the way, in a certain hall of area 1-2-21, we happened to pass by the party of miss Gina and miss Heliona that were fighting a Soldier Mantis. Soldier Mantises are weak monsters that are around level 13-18.

Although I've said hall, there are variations in elevation, and curtain-shaped screens are also hanging from the ceiling, so the field of view is bad. These curtain-shaped screens which I've seen here and there in the halls and corridors seem to be wreckages of spiderwebs that have accumulated dust.

The person who seems to be the party leader over there seems to have noticed us too, but it seems the leader doesn't intend to have a contact with us unless we get closer.

Those girls are in a party of 10 people, four in full-body metal armors, two in partial metal armors, and the other four are in leather armors.

Miss Gina is using a long spear instead of the flail from before, and she's attacking a monster from behind a heavy soldier who seems to be Miss Heliona. It seems she's injured as there's a bandage wrapped on one of her arm.

There's a single magician who sometimes shoots out firebolts from the furthermost behind. I feel that the firebolts often hit the magician's friends instead of the monsters, but it must be my imagination. The jeers must also be my imagination.

"Ugeh, that fire magician is terrible. The firebolt was aimed at the back of the vanguard shield-user."
"Affirmative. That magician is a dangerous pyromaniac, so I assert."

They should be able to win since there's only one opponent, but it'll be

dangerous if there are many.

We continue without calling out to them, and join the beastkin girls who have gone ahead to the exit.

"Easy victory~?" "Nanodesu!"
"Master, we've collected the magic cores."
"Thank you. Then, let's go."

I receive the three Soldier Mantises' magic cores from Liza. I had asked the three to go ahead and exterminate a small group of Soldier Mantises that were coming from the passage. Since Pochi has a shallow cut on her cheek, I heal her with [Aqua Heal].

I put the remains of the Soldier Mantises besides the magic cores in the same folder in my Storage since they may be useful for something. I can also put it in Arisa's space magic [Garage], but since it consumes large amount of magic power, we don't use it for now.

There are a lot of Mantis-type and Grasshopper-type monsters in this area 21. It seems they can be sold handsomely, largish parties are encamping in each halls of this area.

Looking at them when we passed by, every party didn't seem like they were fighting all-out, they always had reserves who weren't fighting.

I thought that they were taking safety margin, but I realized that they were taking precautions against something other than monsters after they warned me. It's probably not only against the lost thieves, but also explorers who should have been their companions. There might explorer parties with a bad manner who snatch the monster that the other have defeated after much hardship from the side.

◇

We discovered a body that's getting eaten by monsters in the main corridor that connects to the area where miss Gina and the others were just now.

I shoot [Short Stun] to tear the monsters off the bodies, and Arisa's firebolts burn down the Maze Cockroaches. Apparently, it's an easily burnable monster.

The body that were getting eaten by the cockroach monsters is of one of the person who's picking a quarrel with us in the West Guild, one of the friends of the man called Besso. I put the hair of the deceased and the bronze plates that Liza has collected into the Storage.

"Ugeh, maybe he got attacked from behind when he was running."
"Affirmative. I recommend children not to see this."

There's a crossroad ahead of this corridor, the left has Besso and one of his friend, and the right is a hall with a large-scale party of 20 people. The party are fighting monsters twice their number. Among them, there are two people from [Beautiful Wings], and the party of three beastkins from the ant-train incident.

Besso and his friend seem to be escaping without any monster pursuing them. Those two only have around 20% healths left, but since their life natures seem to be dirty, they will probably survive.

Rather than that, I'm more interested with the composition of the 20-people party. The five core members are around levels 15-18, but the other 15 are levels 5-10, they're somewhat unreliable to fight monsters in this area. Bluntly speaking, it's absurd. Even the cockroach that Arisa had effortlessly defeated just now was at level 12.

I don't want to leave acquaintances to their deaths, and our members can probably win unhurt, so I guess I'll intrude upon it.

I also thought about cleaning it up from a distant, but I decided to let everyone fight this time.

I'm not thinking that we should stop being inconspicuous, but we've already been conspicuous enough after getting the Red Iron promotion from the guildmaster. Showing everyone's abilities in front of other explorers, so that the surrounding recognize it sooner will probably decrease troubles.

Fortunately, since my true strength won't spread, people will think that I'm an incompetent noble who's surrounded by strong retainers, and I will become the target of threats or kidnapping instead. It might be nice to purposely let myself get kidnapped, and have Pochi and Tama save me afterward.

◇

"Satou, a fork."
"Yeah, there are 20 explorers who are fighting cockroach monsters like before to the right of the crossroad."
"Then, we should go straight?"

I usually let Liza or Arisa make a judgment from Mia's report, but I decide on the plan this time since people's life are hanging here.

"No, my acquaintances are there, and they will be annihilated if they're left alone so let's save them."
"Is it alright?"

Arisa asked since it wasn't like the usual me, so I told my thinking just now to everyone. Mysteriously, not just Arisa, every member is also enthusiastic to be in the situation where they save me from kidnapping.
Leaving that aside, since everyone has agreed, we proceed to the right on the crossroad.

"And, who are those acquaintances?"
"It's the female party and the beastkins from the ant-train incident back then."
"Wait you, I'm fine with helping them, but don't raise some strange flag okay."

How rude.

"I remember. Those vulgar people who were hugging master right."

I wonder what, Lulu looks somewhat dark.

◇

In the hall that we had arrived at, maybe the leader-shi was competent, there was no casualty despite the party being clearly in disadvantage.

They have already been cornered in one part of the hall though.
They're in perilous situation enough that if even one party member dies, they will be annihilated.

Now then, I'm sorry that it looks like we're waiting for our turn to show up, but let's let the cavalry out.

10-21. New Hunting Ground (2)

Satou's here. If it's too good to be true, then there must be something attached to it. There are some intricate frauds with not-really-good-to-be-true talk subtly mixed in nowadays, maybe it's for the sake of deceiving cautious people. And, even in another world, there are people who entice other people.

◇

"Mia, use your spirit magic to for illumination when I give you the signal. Arisa shoots the firebolt chantlessly toward the cockroach once Mia unleashes her magic. I will separate the cockroaches from the explorers while matching the timing of the firebolt's impact, so Liza, Pochi and Tama are to assault every cockroaches okay."
"Master, shouldn't we call out to them before we illuminate the hall?"

Liza raised her hand lightly, and gave an advice. That's true.

"We wouldn't want them to mistake us as lost thieves and attack us instead after we've gone the trouble of saving them after all."
"You're right. I entrust calling them to Liza. Mia should use her magic once Liza signals to her after she's made sure that the other party have acknowledged."
Arisa, I'm sorry, but after the first magic, don't use your magic chantlessly again, also, abstain from using space magic. Lulu too, since magic guns are conspicuous, please use only nature magic this time. Nana, you're with me house-sitting here."
"I'm dissatisfied in anger, so I complain."

Unfortunately, Nana has to persevere from her shield duty. After all, Nana and me shouldn't have been in the labyrinth.
I wait until everyone conveys their consent, and the strategy begins.

Cockroaches are encircling the explorers in the hall where they are located.

We are just right on the flank of the cockroaches to begin the attack.

"We're 『Pendragon』. We will help!"
"Oh, yer a big help!　If we survive this, I'll treat everyone of you in the bar!"

I thought that they would argue back, but the leader seemed to have promptly acknowledged our help. They must have been really quite cornered.

First, the light ball from Mia's spirit magic illuminates the battlefield from the ceiling. In no time flat, an explosion from Arisa's firebolt occurred in the center of the cockroaches. The cockroach that has been directly hit is blazing up, and the cockroaches around it are also burning.

I slip my [Magic Hands] in the explosion and hurl the cockroaches from the explorers to a place slightly away from them.

"Ugeh, disgusting."
"Mwuu."

I understand Arisa's and Mia's feels. I also agree. I didn't think that they would straighten up midair and began flying. As expected of cockroaches.

The three beastkin girls assault on the battlefield while leaving red traces of light from the magic edge.
It was a one-sided trampling.

The entire health of a cockroach disappeared with a single blow from Pochi's short magic sword. Tama's twin magic swords one-sidedly shaves away the cockroach's health with slashing attacks. Even though their health have been reduced by Arisa's firebolt, it's still quite something.

As for Liza, she cuts down the cockroaches on the ground with magic edge, and shoots down the flying cockroaches with magic edge cannon. She's the very embodiment of one-hit kill.

『Awesome, they're cutting down those hard shell like it's nothing.』
『Cih, I can do that much too if I only have magic weapons.』
『Imposs~ible. My mantis sword is also a magic sword, but as you can see

what's happened.』

I pick up voices from the other party with Attentive Ears skill.

I had limited the cockroaches course so only as many as they could manage got close to them, so they now have room to converse.

Guessing from their conversations, looks like the monster-part weapon that the leader-shi is using is a magic sword. I didn't notice since it didn't have red trails of light. Since it seems that it's made from mantis-type monster, I'll try to create the same thing when I'm free.

◇

The vanguards aren't the only ones doing great of course, the rear guard, Arisa and the others are too.

"Fuhahaha!　The cockroaches are like trash～ no～ the oily bugs they are, burning nicely～ now, once more. I'll go with Fire Circle this time～"

Arisa's tension is dangerous.
Nevertheless, it seems that she still has some sense left to chant the magic properly, and not get the beastkin girls and the other party members rolled up in her magic.

Arisa's showy firebolt and fireball are standing out, but Lulu's [Force Spear (Javelin)] is also steadily killing the cockroaches.
Since Lulu's magic power isn't as much as Arisa and Mia, every time her MP has diminished, I make her stop beside me, and I use [Magic Power Transfer] to replenish her MP.

Mia walked on the space that the beastkin girls and Arisa had opened, and began healing the explorers there. Unlike me and Arisa, Mia can't see the explorers' stats, so I use [Telephone] to instruct her to people that need to be casted with [Clear Poison] or [Water Heal].

『My pain is disappearing.』

『Oh, my wounds are healed, I can continue fighting now.』
『What's this, I can feel my numbed arms and legs again.』
『Me too.』
『Thank you! Magician girl!』
<TLN: the 'girl' part here can also mean 'kid/child'>

Mia was wearing her hood so the explorers didn't seem to notice that she was an elf, but since they could immediately discern her build, they seemed to interpret her as a girl, or maybe a kid. I couldn't see it from here, but I clearly understood that Mia was nodding while being embarrassed.

The charming-san from Beautiful Wing party seems to have gotten a direct attack from the cockroach, her upper body suffers from a big injury. Mia was going to heal her with magic, but they seemed to have used their clothes as bandages, the upper half of their bodies were exposed, it had become a sight for sore eyes. Mia seemed to have properly given them the mantles and shirts that I had asked Mia beforehand. They're just cheap things I've bought from Seryuu city long ago, but it's probably better than wearing nothing.

With Mia's magic, the explorers who have become unable to fight return to the battlefield little by little. Thanks to that, the battle over there is stabilizing.

Now then, the cockroaches extermination seems to be entering the end game.
The explorers with insufficient levels are also working in group and have successfully defeated a cockroach. Some of them begin to pointlessly chatter while fighting.

『That damn Besso, what kind of nice hunting ground is this.』
『Saying that stray maze cockroach comes out alone here so we can safely hunt it, damn him.』

I see, I thought that Besso had attracted the swarm to them, but they were taken by his cajolery huh.

『I thought I was going to die when so many of them were coming.』

『We're indebted to Pendragon huh.』
『As expected of the Red Iron Plate that guildmaster personally selected.』

I'm relieved that they're not holding some strange grudge like having their prey taken or something.

◇

Arisa and Mia have returned.

"Hey hey, the leader over there said that these many cockroaches don't usually come out around this area."
"He said."
"Looks like it."

While checking the surrounding areas and corridors with the map, I replenish the two's magic power. Arisa repeatedly said [Flag]. And, in accordance to Arisa's request, a big game is coming.

"Arisa, according to my guess, a Gushing Hole will appear in the innermost wall from my standpoint in 4-5 minutes."

Okay okay with the "Flag, it's here!", just listen to me.

"It's a 『Hunter Mantis』. It's a strong level 35 mantis-type monster, so be careful."
"Okay, I'll tell it to Liza."
"Nn."

While leaving the few cockroaches left to the explorers, Arisa and the others are preparing to intercept the expected point of the Gushing Hole. Everyone seemed to have drank stamina and healing potions as their various gauges have all restored to the maximum. Nana and me are moving to get close to Arisa and the others under the cover of the darkness.

The Hunter Mantis-kun that has appeared from the gushing hole is quite big. Its overall height is 5 meters, around as high as a two-story building. It's

twice as tall as a Soldier Mantis. It's a bit of a Kaijuu isn't it. Unlike normal mantis, this one has a pair of sickle arms on each side, and 10 legs.

While thinking so, I use [Magic Hand] to prevent the Gushing Hole from closing. As expected, it won't close as long as there is some kind of obstacle.

After seeing that huge body, the explorers are rushing toward the hall exit--the place where we have just entered from--in a hurry. Looks like it barely hasn't become a panic since the leader-shi over there instructs them with loud voice.

The explorers have evacuated to the border of the main corridor, but several high-leveled ones are looking here. It seems that they intend to help if things get dangerous, but it looks like they understand that they will only drag us down, they don't seem like they're going to participate at the moment.

◇

"Pochi, Tama, this time Nana isn't participating. Pay attention to keep it from going toward the rear guard."
"Don't worry be happy～"
"Roger nanodesu!"

Tama got it wrong like usual, but she jumped back to avoid the sweeping attack of the Hunter Mantis' big sickle. With Flickering Movement skill, Pochi avoids the Hunter Mantis' leg that comes trampling down from above.

Liza was trying to intercept the trampling Hunter Mantis' leg with her magic spear--but as expected, looks like it was impossible. The leg seemed to have taken some damage, but Liza's plan to deprive it of its leg didn't materialize.

"It won't get find out from this distance, so it's alright for me to mix some space magic in right?"
"Master, your permission to let me participate."

I agree to Arisa's wish. I also let Nana who looks bored to attack from behind Lulu's back. They use the same nature magic so it probably won't be exposed.

On top of having a hard body, the Hunter Mantis' height meant that only magic and Liza's spear could reach it, so they're having a hard fight.

Tama and Pochi were going to climb the Hunter Mantis' legs, but it kicked them, dropping them to the ground. It's rare for Tama to receive a direct hit.

"Ow ouch~"
"The mantis person is childish despite being huge nodesu!"

Yup, they're unhurt.

Their defenses have been strengthened. They would be severely wounded if they get directly hit by the big sickle as expected, but they seems alright if it's just a kick. Pochi has put her face guard on during the battle so I can't see her expression, but her big gestures is transmitting her indignation quite enough.

This time Liza pierced the magic spear from below the Hunter Mantis' abdomen, but since its abdomen was as hard as its shell unlike normal mantis, it didn't suffer much injury. Since it made it attack in rage like with the monster in a game instead, I feel that it's better for her to aim at another place.

"...■■ Flame"

The flame born from Mia's spirit magic burns the Hunter Mantis. Looks like it has resistance to it, it isn't damaged much.
Still, it seems to be feeling hot, the Hunter Mantis opens its back shell and spreads its wings, threatening us.

"Pochii!"
"Tamaa!"

The two who have sheathed their swords are going to do something behind the Hunter Mantis. Tama rushes to Pochi who has crouched while joining

her hands--Jump! Combining the throwing power of Pochi, and Tama's own running jump power, Tama had splendidly landed on the Hunter Mantis' back.

Tama pulls her twin swords, and stab the defenseless back of the Hunter Mantis with them.

The Hunter Mantis closed its back shell in panic, but it was a bad move as it only made Tama's twin sword sink further. Making use of the spilled blood, Mia uses her [Balloon] magic to wrench open the back shell. Tama got thrown into the air from the force, but it was fine since she skilfully caught the back shell midair.

The defenseless back immediately fell prey to Arisa's [Space Destruction(Smasher)] magic and Liza's Magic Edge Cannon, decreasing the Hunter Mantis' health greatly. At this time, one of the back shell couldn't close anymore, maybe the tendon for opening and closing it was cut.

The physically reinforced Nana stealthily tosses Pochi towards that back. After the flurry of Pochi and Tama magic edges dances, the Hunter Mantis finally used up all its strength, and collapsed to the ground.

"Big victory!" "Nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama raise their victory cries on the back of the Hunter Mantis. I can hear shouts of joy from the distant explorers.

Since I won't be able to collect the remain of the Hunter Mantis like this, I use [Magic Hands] to move it like a marionette and go away to beyond the Gushing Hole that I've left open. I collect the Hunter Mantis remain into my storage at the unseen place.

I tell Liza the plan for their exit with [Telephone], she will have to tell the explorers in my place. I also explain the plan to everyone.

"We will chase after the Hunter Mantis that has escaped! We will not come back here, so please go back to Selbira without waiting for us!"

After we all had entered the Gushing Hole, I closed the Gushing Hole behind.

There is no Sign Monument here, so we advance through the narrow corridor with the help of the light Mia's produced.

I've confirmed on the map that this has become the shortcut to the new hunting ground.
There are a lot of enemies, but they are all small fry, so we will probably arrive faster than planned.

10-22. New Hunting Ground (3) [Revised]

Satou's here. There are various abnormal statuses that appear in games like poison or paralyze. Even though abnormal status is hard to deal during the beginning of the game, since there are a lot of games where you get items that invalidate abnormal status during the endgame, I feel that it's become a mere trope.

◇

"What's that?"
"Don't look. It's the boss of the basilisks. You'd get turned to stone."
"Could it be, that's the Floor Master?"
"No, it seems that there's no Floor Master in the upper stratum."

There are few sign monuments around this area, so someone with normal eyesights can only see shades inside the hall.

The giant lizard fit to be likened to a hill is the master of Area 77, the [Mother Basilisk]. I imagined that it would vaguely look like a crocodile, but if I have to say, its appearance looks similar to a chameleon. It's about 7-8 meters tall, but the full body length is around 70-80 meters. If this hall didn't have nearly 300 meters long side, it probably wouldn't be able to move.

Beside this boss-like monster, there are around 10 10-meter class stone lizards (Basilisks) in this hall. The Basilisks' levels are in the first half of 30s, so they originally should have been just right to be opponents for everyone, but since their petrification is dangerous, I intend to pass through them.

"Master, are the basilisks the smoked meat that we were eating during the dwarves dinner party?"
"That was~" "Delicious nodesu!"
"It felt a bit sizzling on the tongue, but it went very well with sweet liquor didn't it."

"Mwu."

I feel they're implying that we should hunt them.

"I'll hunt 2-3 of them later, so don't get close to them okay."
"Is it because the petrification is dangerous after all?"

I answered "That's right" while nodding to Arisa's question.

"Petrivication~?" "Nanodesu?"
"Gufufufu~ Let me tell you~"
"Arisa is having an evil face nodesu! That's the sign of her trying to deceive Pochi nanodesu!"
"No~ way~ I'm really going to tell you."

Tama was pulling my clothes, so I looked back, and I saw a Lesser Basilisk crawling in hiding. I quickly fell its neck with [Flexible Sword] magic and put it into the storage with [Magic Hand] without moving it from its place. There's a possibility that the head still has the power to petrify like medusa in legend after all. It just so happened that there were several Lesser Basilisks and one Basilisk in our route ahead, so I killed them and put them into my Storage. I cut only one small-sized one into block sizes that will make it easy to smoke.

"Nyunyu~?"
"What's wrong nodesu?"

Tama puts both her hands on her head and puzzle over something.

"If it stares, stone~? Bacilisik can't play staring-game~?"
"That's bad nanodesu! Poor basilisk person, they can't play staring game nanodesu!"

You were worrying about such thing huh.

"Perseus did use mirror's reflection to turn Medusa into stone. Why don't you make shields with mirror surface and let us fight with it."

Why do you want to fight so much.

"Don't complain to me if your clothes and equipment get petrified and you have to fight bare naked."

Leave the "get stronger every time you takes off your clothes" power to the oversea ninja alone. Moreover, I can see your era when you look at your own body, take a strange pose and then wink, so please stop it.

◇

The area 74 that we've finally arrived at is composed of 10 big halls and 30 small rooms that are connected. We were able to substantially cut the time it takes to get here thanks to the shortcut that connected the roaches room to the Basilisk area.

The first hall is the frogs area that's half-submerged in water. There are many megaliths covered in moss on the surface, while algae and water plant are floating on the water surface on the shore. A large lotus-like leaves have grown on the water surface in the center of the room, a lot of small insects are flying near the water plant. They seem to be normal insects as they have no particularly strange effect.

Swarm of bats are crowding near the ceiling. These bats seem to be monsters, but since their levels are in single digit, let's leave them alone unless they come attacking.

It seems that there's a hidden room in the depth of this area, let's make it into our personal Teleport Point.
After I've finished the general check, I permit Liza and the others to fight.

"Then, Tama, lure some reasonable monster."
"Aye aye sir～"

Tama erases her presence, moves between the megaliths, drawing closer to a Rock Frog that's sleeping on the shore. She attacks the Rock Frog from behind a megalith with a magic gun. Just like monsters in games, it shouldn't have been able to notice the first attack, but it seems that the

Rock Frog's view is wide as it seems to have discovered Tama.

It's jumping with its body like a frog would, and Tama avoids it by using some obstacle. Vibration shakes whenever the frog lands. While not letting the frog caught up to her, Tama brought it to the place where everyone had readied their battle formation. There's only one frog that has come. Since it doesn't seem to have a link, my turn is none.

"You frog! Drop that thick skin of yours and live in humility, so I declare!"

Pulled by Nana's usual incomprehensible provocation, the Rock Frog changes its target from Tama to Nana.

The Rock Frog is only four meters tall, but it seems to be quite heavy. Its outer skin is covered in blue rocks, looks like it'll be hurt to normally strike on it with swords. Its level is 34, and looks like it can spit out deadly poison in bullet forms.

Since I've already lectured those, everyone besides Liza has used [Shell] to protect their swords' blades.

Nana blocks the charge of a body that weight God-knows-how-many tonnes. Nana retreats back after yielding to its weight, but it's only for several meters. Nana seems to have nicely used nature magic to put spikes on the soles of her shoes.

"Flame charge nanodesu!"

With the combination of Arisa's fire magic and Pochi's physical reinforcement, she assaults the rock frog's flank like a cannon by combining Flickering Movement and Heavy Blow. The heavy body of the Rock Frog floats for an instant from the blow of small Pochi.

Arisa invokes the space magic [<<Dimension Piles>>] during that short moment, many penetrate the Rock Frog's belly. The dimensional stakes seem to pierce deeper due to the frog's own weight. She's cleverly used the opponent's weight against itself.

Lulu holds a magic artillery beside me and attacks, aiming at the Rock

Frog's big eyes. The Rock Frog's eyes seemed to be protected by glass-like transparent shell as it had only dazzled for a bit even after receiving the huge bullet of the magic artillery.

From the opposite side, Liza who has activated magic edge is stabbing at the frog while aiming at its eyes and flank. Tama unleashes flurry of attack from magic edged twin magic swords on the wound under the frog's skin that Pochi has opened.

The Rock Frog is flinching, as maybe it has never received such one-sided attacks like this before. It was going to spit out venom bullets in desperation, but Nana who has promptly sensed it stopped it with [Remote Stun] of nature magic. The venom that it was going to spit out stopped in its mouth.

Mia invokes [<<Water Shredder>>] magic in its mouth, the Rock Frog suffers great damage from the poison that it has secreted itself. Is it suffering from the poison, or is the wounds hurt, it's attacking randomly with its tongue, and Nana splendidly handles it with her magic sword and great shield.

In the end, Liza settled it with Spiral Spear Attack, and the Rock Frog dropped down on the ground.
Pochi and Tama who usually do victory cries vigorously come beside me instead.

"Smells nice~?"
"Is it done nodesu?"

I'm making pickling sauce for the Basilisk meat from before. Since Arisa was complaining before, I've used (Air Control) to make the wind blows the other way and don't let the smell reach the battlefield.

"Not yet. After this sauce has cooled down, the meat has to be pickled in it and be left overnight."
"Unfortunate nanodesu."
"Looking forward, tomorrow~"

Right at that time, Liza came back while carrying a big red magic core, and

lump of frog meat that should easily weight dozens kilograms.

"I have retrieved the hind legs that haven't been poisoned. I think it's better to not eat the torso meat."
"I'm sorry."
"Don't mind~"
"There are still a whole lot more frogs, so it's alright nanodesu."

Mia dejectedly apologizes for exploding the poison. The beastkin girls didn't seem to be angry, they cheered Mia up.

I take out the barbecue set that I've put into the storage beforehand, and begin grilling the frog meat. Although we've only just begun the hunt and it's still a long while until lunch, I've decided to start the lunch early since the hungry call is likely to occur.

The frog meat is too large to grill it just like that on the mesh, so I cut it into some palm-sized thick slices. The smell of the burning from the dipping meat juice spreads to the surrounding. I'm grilling two types of meat; one that's ordinarily seasoned with salt, and one that's smeared with the marinade for the smoked meat from just before.
I also grilled vegetables for Mia, and warmed the corn pancakes from before. It's quite chaotic with the smell of burning honey even mixing in. I regulate the air with Air Control to prevent the smell from getting mixed.

"Stupid delish~?"
"Grilled stuff is the strongest nanodesu!"
"It's softer than I thought, but it's truly delicious with the abundant meat juice. The meat that's grilled with sauce tastes salty-sweet, but it's growing on you isn't it."

Pochi and Tama are holding frog meat on iron skewers on both their hands and fully enjoying the barbecue while alternately biting on it. Liza is talking heartily she seems really happy. Nana uniformly chew on the meat and the vegetables. Mia still has different menu than everyone even now, but she's moving her small mouth with all her might to eat.

Arisa and Lulu are eating normally as they seem to have gotten used to monster meat recently. Particularly Lulu, she's trying various sauces on

small slices of meat. She's not only doing it for herself, she also asks Liza and the others to try it, looks like she's adjusting the difference between their palates.

◇

After the meal short break, the hunt resumes.
We continue the hunt while I'm regulating so that no dangerous situation arise.

I was planning to have us rest in the Mansion of Ivy in the night because it had been a while since our last series of battles against high-level enemies, but since Arisa said some strange remark, "Labyrinth-feel will disappear", I decided to have us stay at the labyrinth villa in area 17 like yesterday.

There's no "Labyrinth-feel will disappear" even though we stay in the safe villa with bath.

10-23. Residences of the Mansion

Satou's here. I randomly imagine about some bizarre event when I look at a western-style house during the popularity of a genre called 'Mansion'. I also remember that there are many (games) where the mistress of the house is the mastermind for some reason.

◇

Now then, two days after we set the carved seal board in the new hunting ground--area 74, we decided to go back to the mansion. I went back to the mansion once every day with [Return] to see the situation there, but since Arisa and the others wanted to see Ms. Miteruna, they're currently going back through area 4. The reason why they didn't return the day after that was to hide the space magic. It would be strange if they got back earlier than the explorers who were exterminating the maze cockroaches when they should have been behind, so we delayed it by one day.

Nana and me directly teleport to the mansion ahead of them. We're teleporting to the stable. I've confirmed that there's no one beside the horses. They're good horses for not being surprised to us who appear suddenly. I've decided to give them special-made feed as the reward. It's a new one that's added with smashed corns.

We leave the stable and head to the main building. The girls who were working on the garden seemed to have noticed us and came to us. They're called Roji and Annie if I'm not mistaken.

"Welcome home, Chevalier-sama."
"Welcome home."
"Ah, I'm home."

The radar caught on Ms. Miteruna who seemed to have noticed the two's cheerful voices and then went to the entrance hall.

I've already confirmed the situation of the children and Ms. Miteruna with [Clairvoyance] magic. Although I can't say that they've opened their hearts, they've become better.

"Welcome home, master."
"I'm back, did anything happen during my absence?"
"Yes, two letters have arrived."

In the living room, I'm listening to Ms. Miteruna about the visitors and events here during my absence.

The letters are from Viscount Shimen and Marchioness Ashinen. It seems the Viscount is going back to the duchy capital the day after tomorrow, so he's inviting me to a dinner tomorrow.

Marchioness Ashinen invites me to a tea party the noon of the day after tomorrow. It seems that the wifes and daughters of Selbira's influential nobles regularly attend the tea party. Since personal connections helped me a lot in the duchy capital, I wrote the acceptance letter and gave it to Ms. Miteruna.

Oh right, I remembered about the letters.
I hand over the remaining bundle of the greeting letters that I've written last night to Ms. Miteruna. She looked slightly surprised due to the bundle's thickness. These are for my acquaintances in the duchy capital and the dwarves in Bollhart. I've written the shares for princess Menea's at the royal capital, and the viceroy's daughter Ririna's too of course.
I've also written our present condition besides greeting formalities for Sera and the people whom I'm close to.

Unlike for faraway place like Muno Barondom, there are merchant caravans that regularly go to the royal capital, and then airships can go from the royal capital to the duchy capital, so passing the letter is also easy. The dwarf hometown is slightly too far, but since there are merchant caravans that regularly go there from the duchy capital, it should be fine.

◇

The children whom we've saved have recovered enough to do simple chores, thanks to the nourishments and magic potions. After they've restored their muscle strengths later, they should be alright.

By Ms. Miteruna's advice, the children's beds have been moved to the servant building from the main building.

The reason why those children were in such place was because they wanted a kind of grass that were growing in the stable. The fruits of the grass called Tami Poppy seems to be very bitter, but it can be used as painkiller. However, it contains slight toxin, so when someone ingests it in large quantity, their consciousness will become turbid and lethargic.

They needed such painkiller due to the injuries they had gotten in the labyrinth. For baggage carriers who have bone fractures especially, their only choices are either selling themselves to the slave trader or die a dog's death. The slave trader had given up on these children. Since getting saved like in this case seemed to be quite rare, the children were extremely grateful.

That's not the reason of me wanting to employ these children as the mansion's servants though. This mansion needs various helping hands since there are magic tools in this mansion unlike the mansions of the duchy capital nobles, so this is just right.

"Then, are you going to let them stay in the mansion?"
"They don't seem to have any aim even if we let them go. Could you teach them how to work little by little?"
"I accept. I will bring them up into excellent maids."

Ms. Miteruna reassuringly accepted it. Quite reliable.

"Right, how much do people usually pay children for labor?"
"You don't have to pay them if they live in."

According to her, in exchange of not paying them until they grow up, you have to guarantee their food, clothing and shelter. If you're going to hire them after they've grown up, the common payment is one silver coin,

although it also depends on their ability. The payment is not for a day worth. It's for one month. Of course the sum will go up when their job description increases, or their ability improves.

By the way, Ms. Miteruna's wage is one gold coin a month.

"Master, please give the children clothing and footwear if you're going to employ them. You don't have to give them something expensive, but if you let them wear old rags and be bare footed, people will doubt the family status of Pendragon house."

Worrying about family status of a house that's just been established for several months is one thing, but I do want to give them clothes and footwears.

"I understand. Buy them 2-3 clothes including for changes. If the money I've given before isn't enough, should I add it?"
"No, if master allow me use one silver coin from the money that has been given to me, it should be enough for old clothes and strings. Changes for underwear are needed, but it's enough to give them one clothes each. If their treatments were too lavish, the servants' attitudes would become arrogant--"

Ms. Miteruna gently reproved me. I intend to tailor maid uniforms for them later, is that bad too?

"Tailoring matching clothes for the servants is it? Having matching maid uniforms do happen in grand nobles' mansions, but only in big cities like the royal capital and the duchy capital, there is no mansion that does such thing in this savage labyrinth city."

It just doesn't exist, not prohibited, so I've decided to present maid uniforms to the children when they've become able to work their own job.

◇

Arisa and the others have returned. For some reason, she contacted me

with [Telephone] when they just came out of the labyrinth gate. Looks like they've been surrounded by explorers, and can't move.It seems they will handle it appropriately and go back here.

Arisa and the others arrived one hour later.

"We were crowded, it was terrible you know. They're holding party celebrating the safe return in the tavern tonight they said. Master was also invited."
"Understood. I'll go with you since I don't have any plan tonight."

She hands me a small sack with cash while grumbling. The payment from the sales of magic cores and materials is a bit much. It seems the leader of the roach extermination party has given the magic cores payment for the roaches that we exterminated.

"He apologized that he couldn't bring back most of the roach's material since they didn't bring baggage carrier."
"What kind of things can be made from roach's material?"
"Dunno? Maybe roach armor and helmet?"

Looks like she's not really interested, Arisa absentmindedly replies.

◇

Now then, I gather Arisa and the others and the servants in the hall, and let them introduce themselves to each other.

By the way, the dying children are all human girls, and their names are Junni, Aina, Kitona, Suna, Teriona, and Hoho from the eldest to the youngest. I thought that they were ugly since the slave trader abandoned them, but every girl looks normal although plain. Their hair are all cut in short cut or bob cut since the grooming is hard.

"Then, everyone besides Nana-sama and Mia-sama is a slave?"
"Yeah, I'd like to release Arisa and Lulu but I can't since there's a bit of circumstance. I would immediately release Liza and the others if they wish

so though."

I answer Ms. Miteruna's question with a bitter smile.
They've obtained Red Iron Plates after all, they're already fine enough to be released anytime. I have to seriously research the way to release the enforcement (Geass) once Arisa and the others have leveled up enough.

"Master, our wishes are to repay the favor to master. Please use us as slaves as it is."
"Unneeded child~?"
"Please don't abandon me nodesu."

They said similar things like when I was going to release them in Seryuu city back then. How about retainers instead of slaves?

"You're not unneeded child. What about becoming my retainers, not slaves?"
"Retainerrs~?"
"Everyone becomes a retainer nodesu?"
"Arisa and Lulu have to wait a bit though."
"Can we do it together~?"
"Then we do it together nodesu."

Arisa puts her arms on Pochi's and Tama's necks and shouts "Cute~ mou!" while swinging around. Lulu also looks really happy.

"Right! Since they're going to be employed here, how about teaching them letters?"
"You're right, can you lend them that learning cards?"
"Aye" "Nanodesu!"

I agree on Arisa's suggestion. The later words were from Pochi and Tama. Since they're OK with it, I ask Arisa to teach the children and Ms. Miteruna the way to play the learning cards. Ms. Miteruna looks really puzzled while saying "Teaching letters to commoner children?"

"That's right~ All members of team 『Pendragon』 can read, write and calculate after all."
"Th-these children too?"

Pochi and Tama who are pointed by Ms. Miteruna answer "Of course~", "Nanodesu!" and begin reading picture books out loud. They have to properly stop at the punctuations though.

I asked the senior group that are Lulu, Liza and Nana while Arisa was lecturing the way to play the learning cards.

◇

I'm absorbed in reading a book on the chair that I've put under the tree on the courtyard.
It's a dummy of course.

In actuality, I'm currently investigating the experiment for Living Armor's source of power. The prime candidate is the magic power vessel (battery) like the scarecrows use, but since it needs special material like world tree's sap, I want something more generic.

Suddenly, I thought about the holy sword and the wooden magic sword that had been filled with magic power.

Right, filling things with magic power itself is possible even without using special material like world tree's sap. The problem are the storage capacity, period and also efficiency. Now then, let's look for some usable circuit for it.

Lulu calls out to me as if she's seen through that I've decided on the rough objectives.

"Master, how about some tea?"

Lulu is carrying a glass goblet with blue tea inside. It's a cold tea that's proper with the TPO.

"Thank you, did you cool it with life magic?"
"Yes! Using magic is really convenient."

Lulu who's talking to me while smiling with her whole face is dazzling. Her magic capacity has increased with her level so she's become able to freely use the magic.

It might be a good idea to teach the children life magic and compounding after they've learned to read and write.
While thinking such thing, my mind goes back to the magic tool study.

10-24. Explorers

Satou's here. I remember about being surprised to see the figure of someone scooping the egg yolk of a boiled egg with a spoon in some kind of movie long ago. I've already forgotten the rest of the movie, but for some reason, only that scene leaves a deep memory.

◇

"Then, thanks for everyone from 『Pendragon』 for their rescue! And for our safe return, today let's drink the night away!"
""""YEAH!""

The feast begins with the leader-shi's greeting. His name is Koshin, and he seems to be the leader of a veteran explorer party called [White Horse Mane]. Gathering multiple parties and then going to the labyrinth deep like this time isn't their first time.

The party is located on the square where stalls have gathered ahead of the street with bungalows that's 300 meters to the east of the west gate. Around 30 food stalls and 10 drink stalls are lined up. The light from the stall signs are bright. Apparently, life magicians are using magic to illuminate it.

Besides us, there are also other explorers and day laborers-like people like carries who are enjoying the food and liquor from the stalls. Among them, there are young ladies with sensual clothes and strangely sexy young men here and there, sprinkling their charms. Either of them seem to be prostitutes.

One section of the square has been occupied today. It seems they've reserved one liquor stall, and three food stalls for the party.

There are no chairs and tables, it seems we're going to eat and drink in a

circle, sitting on the ground. Lulu and Liza have put a sheet on the corner for the place we're sitting now.

The menu for this party this time are grilled meat, dried meat, boiled beans, and boiled potatoes. They're probably not shabby since Koshin-shi said teasingly "These are some feast" before the party began.

"Magician-san, thank you for the clothes that time."
"Mwu?"

The two people from [Beautiful Wings] come to Mia while carrying something that look like folded clothes. Since Mia who looks troubled seeks help from me, I act on it.

"Please have those clothes if it's fine with you. If you expose too much skin, bad bugs could come after all."

The two are forced to wrap few cloth on their body, so although they can hide the important places, their shoulders and stomaches are bare, it's quite sensual.

"Is it alright?"
"Thank you very much, Chevalier-sama."

The two must have been embarrassed, they readily wear the cheap shirts. They leave the mantles folded since it's hot.

◇

"Hard~"
"This meat person is quite tough nodesu."
"Haha, chibi-chan, you won't chew it if you eat like that. You thin it with a knife and then eat it."

Pochi bite through the meat with a 'pssh' sound. The man who seems to be the stall owner that gave her the advice looks at her in wonder.

"Is it tendon meat?"

Lulu cuts a thin slice of the meat, puts it on a plate, and passes it to me. I chew that meat on my mouth, it's hard alright. It could be softened if it was boiled in a pressure cooker. With some peculiar bad smell, it's hard to say that it's delicious, but it's also not bad enough to make you vomit, it's a delicate taste.

"This might be not to noble-sama's palate since it's monster meat."
"Insect meat is cheap after all, and you get used to it when you eat it everyday."

Looks like these grilled meat and dried meat are made from insect-type monsters. It's a meat that's pitch black before it's even grilled, and it's as tough as tendon meat of animals. As to what kind of insects they are, even the explorers only call it [Insect meat] or [Meat] since the stocks change everyday. It's extremely cheap, one skewer of the meat only cost one penny.

"When I've just become an explorer, I often follow along a strong party from behind and collect the meat of the monster after they've finished stripping it off the materials."
"Although it did become cash, it was quite nasty huh."

It seems there are a lot of explorers who only collect the shells or the claws that can become money from insect-type monsters, and then there are also explorers who specialize in collecting the meat from the leftover. The people who collect such monster meat are called [Corpse Retriever (Looter)], and seen as the lowest. What a strange story considering it's a fine job that supports meals like this.

Some young explorers are exhibiting sword dance-like acrobatics in the center of the explorers circle. When that was over, Pochi and Tama came to the center.

"Pochii!"
"Tamaa!"
"Tou!"

I wonder if someone incites them, they're demonstrating the jump like the

one they've done to the mantis' back. Whoomph, toward Tama who's jumped five meters above, cheers are coming from the surrounding.

Nana caught the fallen Tama. Pochi and Tama, and also the spectator who plead the two to do the jump were scolded by Liza since they made dust enter the meals, they were downhearted.

◇

"These beans and potatoes are soft."
"Nn."

There are a lot of vegetables even though it should be expensive in the labyrinth city.

"These are also monster meat though."
"These are not the meat part you know. They're from the bodies of plant-type monsters called Walking Bean and Hopping Potato."

Looks like these beans and potatoes are taken from monsters. The labyrinth isn't only a mine, but also a ranch, and a farm is it.

I tried eating them a bit, and it seemed that these beans and potatoes are a bit different than normal ones. The bean has hard rind, and peculiar grass smell. There are white fibers that looks like of orange inside, this part is a bit bitter. When I chipped off the part, and then spooned the inside and ate it, it tasted like normal beans.

"As expected of noble-sama. You're refined~"
"Maybe I also should use the spoon?"

Oops, I didn't mean to look refined. Even though I only wanted to take the inside and tasted it, I got some strange admiration instead.

The potato has thin sweetness of potato and stickiness-like taste of taro. They told me that the violet part inside the potato is poisonous so I shouldn't eat it. Although it seems that it only causes upset stomach, there's

no danger to life.

The <<Walking Bean>> is a 30 centimeters tall pod with arms and legs, and there are 2-3 beans inside the pod after you defeat it. Since it's four times as big as normal broad beans, it seems you can earn a penny from 20 of it.

The Hopping Potato is a strange potato-type monster that's jumping around with spiral spring, it's as big as the Walking Bean. You can get as much as 10 kilograms potato from one monster. Since one kilo is one penny, you can get some money from it.
A middle-aged spearman told me that you could easily defeat them by just readying your spear since they attack by ramming themselves. This man has been passionately talking about Liza and spears since a while ago.

Both are area 14 monsters, and explorers who have lost competition for monsters in the big first area often hunt them. Curiously enough, these two monsters either don't give experience at all, or give extremely little. They're monsters no doubt since they have magic cores the size of a rice grain, but it seems that there are people who don't level up despite hunting them for a year. Therefore, they tell me the theory of poor explorers, that is to earn income at the area until you have enough money to buy equipments and then move to another area.

"Now, now chevalier-sama. Let's pour you some."
"Thank you."

I taste the ale that I've received in the cup. It's sour and bad. It tastes like diluted beer mixed with vinegar. According to him this is a luxurious item, everyone is drinking deliciously. The alcohol strength feels less than 5%.

"Ara, Chevalier-sama, you can't drink ale with such refined manner! You have to drink it like, so, in one gulp!"

Looks like the beauty-san of [Beautiful Wings] changes when she drinks liquor, she passionately speaks the way to drink ale.

I've forbidden our members from drinking alcohol since it would be chaotic like before otherwise. Everyone is drinking fruit water that I've brought.

There are also some small barrels of wine and spirits among those, and then the contest quickly happens not long after the start of the party. Although those liquor were just normal things that I bought from liquor store along the way here, it was good that they happily received it.

The patrolling soldiers in red hard leather armor came just 3-4 hours after the sunset. They ordered us to dismiss in loud voice since there is a restriction for doing business late at night in this city.

Since I can't leave the completely wasted [Beautiful Wings] and I don't know their addresses, I've decided to let Liza and Nana carry them to the mansion. The guest room is vacant, so they can just sleep there.

We told our thanks to Koshin-shi who couldn't even articulate words properly from his drunkenness and went back to the mansion.

◇

"We have troubled you greatly yesterday."
"We're very sorry."

The [Beautiful Wings] apologized for last night while enduring the headaches from the hangovers. They don't usually drink themselves that bad in the bar, but they went overboard last night since Koshin-shi was treating. I offer them magic potions for hangover, and invite them to breakfast.

They were deeply moved at the breakfast that Lulu had cooked, maybe it suits their taste. Lulu who looked proud while being bashful from the praise was impressive.

I've heard in the party yesterday, their fine for the ant-train case is two gold coins for each. It seems they have loaned money to pay it, but the debt increases by 30% every 10 days, and they will be sold as slaves if they can't pay the interest every month. I think that's quite an usury, but if I think about the high mortality rate of explorers who die in the labyrinth, it might be appropriate.

I offered the two to let me take over their debts.
Of course this isn't out of sympathy.

Briefly speaking, this is a part of the measure for the labyrinth city orphan plan. Arisa and I racked our brains lately for this problem, and we concluded that training baggage carrier children who want to become explorers in the labyrinth to become full-fledged explorers is the quickest.

They should become able to sustain themselves once they reach levels to an extent, and if they want stability, I could refer them to become soldiers or subordinates of Baron Muno in his territory.

The former baggage carrier children who have become full-fledged explorers then can raise the next generation children and it becomes a nice loop.

The problem with the rearing is if it follows our training regime, they will level up without even getting the minimum knowledge. As the result, they would grow arrogant, careless and thought that they wouldn't die.

Then I heard the story about their debts when I was searching for teachers, so I scouted them.

These girls should be qualified as they've gone through hardships as explorers. These two should be enough for the meantime, but since the three beastkins from the ant-train case should also be suffering from the interest rate, let's think about increasing personnels soon.

I can't lead Arisa and the others for the next two days. During that period, I'll ask everyone to train these two.

10-25. Explorers (2)

"Then, we will be going."

I inform Master so, and then leave the mansion behind.
Master is going to attend Viscount-sama's banquet, and Lulu has promised to teach the children how to cook and read, so they're going to stay.

This time, there are two female explorers, Iruna and Jenna in places of Master and Lulu. Although they're only as strong as normal soldiers, they've been given complete set of ant shell armors, one-handed swords, and shields by Master. They should be fine fighting against slightly higher leveled enemies.

"Then, during the time Chevalier-sama isn't here, the leader is Nana-san right?"
"In charge of battle command is Liza, making judgment during complex situations is Arisa, so I inform."
"Hee, is that so. Please take care of me, Liza-san."

I nod back to Iruna who talks to me sociably. Her way of talking sounds a bit like a man's.

"Then Arisa, what kind of place is area 11 we're going to today?"
"Eh! We're going to area 11?!"
"That is the plan, is there any problem?"

The black haired woman called Jenna cut herself between my conversation with Arisa. According to Arisa, she seems to be beautiful.

"Area 11 is a place full of troublesome monsters like Horn Hoppers or Rockhead Bees isn't it."
"That's right. You know your stuff."
"That's because that place is infamous in a bad way. There are a lot of monsters in the area so desperate explorers who have their prey taken sometimes go there, but most are either dead or receive injuries beyond recovery and retire."

I see, it's formidable. I've heard some good things. I look forward to it.

"Horn Hoppers and Rockhead Bee are certainly hard, but they're easy to handle since they go straight at you."
"Is it really?　I guess it's easy for the people who defeat that giant 『Hunter Mantis』?"
"That's right! If you're going to ride the big ship, hop aboard now."

Arisa is the right person to wipe off anxiety from this party after all.
Still, I wonder where did Arisa get information about Horn Hoppers and Rockhead Bee. She must have heard it from Master doesn't she?

◇

"Ara?　Liza-san, are we not buying oil for hand lanterns?"
"There is no need."

The inside of the labyrinth is bright enough to not be a problem during battles anyway, and Mia can use her magic to put out light in places without a Sign Monument. Moreover, we also have Light Drops.

"Can we stop by the guild for a bit?　I'd like to replenish hemostasis ointments since we've run out of our stock."
"It's unnecessary. Mia can also use healing magic, and we'll give you some magic medicines once we enter the labyrinth."
"Ma-magic medicine?　R-really?　That's like one silver coin for one bottle right?"

I notice that my own sense of money has been numbed while nodding to her.
I've been using them readily since Master has given them readily, but I feel that I have to be economical on it.

"Your life is more important you know. Our Master really dislike it if someone he knows gets hurt. That's why, don't think that you have to save on it okay?"

Arisa advices while sending her line of sight toward me with upturned eyes as if she's read my mind. That is right, our Master is such kind of person.

"How about luminescent stones, or smoke balls and flash balls?"
"Nn~ we have the latter two from Master, but what does luminescent stone do?"
"You drop them on the junctions of the labyrinth. Although it stops glowing in three days, we should not lose the way back to the starting location if we drop these stones."

I see, since we are usually bestowed by Master's perfect guidance, we never leave traces behind. However, it seems to be quite a useful item.

We buy the item in the guild and put it into the magic bag <<Holding Bag>> that master has entrusted. Master has warned us not to use our Magic Pouch in public.

"Eh! Does Liza-san has Item Box skill?"
"No, this bag is a magic tool."
"T,there's that kind of tool huh. As expected of people employed by noble-sama."

These two are a bit noisy aren't they. Please follow Pochi's and Tama's examples. The two are being carried on Nana's arms, hanging quietly.

◇

"They're coming, four Rockhead Bees."
"You worker bees! You are not good just because you're solid, so I declare!"
<TLN: The 'solid' here can also mean steady.>

The four Rockhead Bees are rushing to Nana who's set up her great shield. These Rockhead Bees are monsters that have heads as sturdy as rocks. Master is not here today, so I cannot recklessly use magic edge. Let's go at it steadily, this is not because of Nana's provocation.

"Pochi, Tama, avoid attacking the hard heads and aim for the gap on their necks."
"Aye aye~"
"Roger nanodesu."

I move to the side of the flying bee with Flickering Movement, and thrust my spear on the gap between its rock-like shell. It seems to be a fragile monster, the head separates from its body with just one blow. Pochi and Tama had defeated them without any problem too.

"Nana! Don't kill that one, drop it to the ground."
"Understood!"

Nana blocks the last one with her great shield, and then knocks it down to the ground as instructed by Arisa.

"Iruna, and Jenna, attack that Rockhead Bee."
"Is it alright? The sword will be chipped if I attack like this y'know?"
"It's fine, just hit it! You can break one or two swords!"

The two were hesitating at first, but they finally moved after the second instruction. As for the bee, Nana has stitched its wings to the ground with her magic sword.

The two swing their sword with weak postures, but it doesn't reach. Let's have Nana teach them the way to swing sword a bit later.

◇

"Level 10 enemies are really weak aren't they."
"No no, that conclusion is strange."
"That's right, even a knight in full body armor would suffer great injury if he was rammed by this monster."

That knight must have not enough guts surely.

"You two hear me. When multiple enemies come, exterminate the last enemy that we have left like just now. You two attack the enemy Nana has pinned down."
"Eh?　Is it alright like that?"
"I feel guilty like I'm a stone-throwing baggage carrier."

After I told Iruna who was showing disapproval toward my instruction that it was for the sake of raising their levels, she reluctantly agreed to it.

This kind of high pride of a warrior is likable isn't it.

"By the way, can I ask something?　What's stone-throwing baggage carrier?"
"Ah, do you know that every year during the harvest festival, great number of children from the villages and towns around the vicinity come to this labyrinth city to become explorers and baggage carriers?"
"Yep, I know."
"Some of them are imprudent. There are some baggage carriers who secretly throw a stone to the monster that explorers have desperately defeated and have their level raised. That kind of act is called 『stone-throwing baggage carrier』. If a baggage carrier does such thing even once, he/she won't be hired by explorers ever again."

I see, it must be like snatching prey that has been weakened. Pochi, Tama, and me raised our levels with such method at the beginning, but I shouldn't worry about it since we had received Master's permission for that.

"Eh~ parasitic people exist in any world huh. But, our goal this time is leveling you two up, so keep on keep attacking okay."
"Yeah, I understand. Much obliged."
"We'll work hard so we can quickly become useful."

Now then, the time for conversing should be over soon.
Tama has returned from the other side of the corridor while bringing some Horn Hopper.

"Pretending to be the leader just because you have a horn, how ridiculous!"

There's only monster this time. It doesn't seem like I'll have a turn, but I'm

keeping alert on the surrounding to prevent Arisa and Mia getting attacked.

Tama slips through between Nana's legs. The Horn Hopper vigorously rammed its whole body onto Nana's great shield, but seemed that it was too vigorous, its prideful horn broke and fell on the ground. It's the same great shield that didn't even let a single injury in from the attack of the Hunter Mantis' big sickles. This kind of result isn't surprising in the least.

"No way, it should be able to penetrate an iron plate you know?"
"Oh dear, that's a great shield."
"You two, move your hands before your mouths."
"Yes."
"Understood."

The Horn Hopper is even softer than the Rockhead Bee from before. The two's swords are doing better than before. After confirming that the two have wounded it, I thrust my spear for the finishing blow.

◇

"Liza-san, we will be late for dinner if we don't go back soon."

That's a serious problem.

"How regrettable, we're almost at 100 monsters defeated with just three left."
"Stomach hungry~?"
"Yes nanodesu. Hamburg steak-sensei is waiting nodesu!"

It's hamburg steak tonight huh. It's a bit unsatisfactory since there's no chewiness on the texture, but Lulu should also be making steak. Leaving aside the taste, the chewiness of the monster meat we ate yesterday was quite outstanding. I wonder if the meat of these monsters are like that too?

"Iruna and Jenna, are these monsters edible?"
"Un, horn and rockhead should be edible."
"The body of the rockhead is said to be sweet and tasty, although we can't

bring it back with us if we can't shave off the heavy outer rock shell. I've never eaten it before, but I've heard it from someone."

I see, it is tasty huh.
I leave my spear to Nana, and then peels off the rock shells of the Rockhead Bees by using the disassembly knife I've put on my waist's back. I line the Rockhead Bee's meat on the taking-home meat sheet, Pochi and Tama also bring and line up one body-worth of meat each. These girls must have been fascinated by the talk just now. When Pochi saw that Tama was also bringing the Horn Hopper's meat, she was also going to bring the meat in panic, but I caught her nape, stopping her. Let's have just these much today.

"Hey, do Arisa and the others always fight this many series of battles?"
"As expected, we don't usually defeat this many monsters."
"That's so, isn't it. It's usually only around 30 monsters."
"That's right huh. Your body won't be able to endure it if you always fight with this pace."

I feel that the fights with the higher-leveled enemies we usually do are difficult too, but there is no need to tell them the truth and make them feel down.

◇

We got four gold coins from the meat of Rockhead Bees which were sold for quite a price, and also from the magic cores that had higher grades that I thought. The Horn Hopper meat sold for 20 copper coins for one monster worth. There was no purchase notice for the horns of the Horn Hoppers, but it seems they can be sold for several big copper coins each if you negotiate well at the weapon shops.

I was going to sell all the meat from the Rockhead Bees, but I decided to bring one monster worth of meat as a souvenir for Master.
We had to pay the carrying tax for the Rockhead Bee's meat and the Horn Hopper's horns, but judging from Arisa who didn't complain about it, the sum was probably right.

As ordered by Master, we split the income according to the number of people, including the two girls. Arisa calculated the amount of money. I'm still bad at calculation even now.

It should be alright to split the shares for the Horn Hopper's horns after we've sold them.
At first the two refused the split income since they thought that they were just being a burden, but Arisa told them that it was Master's order, and they were forced to receive it.

"It's amazing. Earning this much by going into the labyrinth for just half a day!"
"Yeah, earning half a gold coin much for each of us is like a dream."

I tell the two who look as if they will grow wings and soar about the plan for tomorrow.

"We're going to hunt with the same pace tomorrow, so eat some good food and have a good rest today."
"T-tomorrow too, like that?"
"Uu, Iruna. I wonder if we can go back to the labyrinth city tomorrow."

I leave the two anxious girls for Arisa to console, let's quickly go home.
Lulu's meals are waiting.

10-26. Dinner and Personal Connections

Satou's here. I remember the homeroom teacher during my senior high school saying "When you've entered the society, take good care of your connection with other people." The person himself only says a stereotypical line, but I'm reminded of those words when I actually enter the society and put it in motion.

◇

"Nice to meet you, Chevalier Pendragon-sama. I am Ogusho, in charge of a trading business between the royal capital and the labyrinth city."
"Ogusho isn't only dealing with luxury goods, but also books and magazines from the royal capital. You can ask this person if you want to seek things related to ingredients and books."

Viscount Shimen introduces me to several of his noble friends and hired merchants during his banquet. Nobles who are related to duchy capital nobles have reasonable influence in the labyrinth city.
The hired merchant is boasting full of confidence that they can even handle urgent missions since they have multiple employees who have [Item Box], and golem carriages. If I occasionally stock up various goods from him, even if I use some rare things, the people around me would probably guess where I got it from.

From what I've seen in the duchy capital, there are two types of golem carriage, one that has golem horses pulling the carriage, and another where the carriage itself is the golem. His carriages seem to be the latter type.

"Hou, golem carriage huh?"
"Yes, my carriage is the golem itself, so we're unperturbed even if monsters or thieves attack."
"That's amazing. Is there a lot of people who ride on golem carriages in the royal capital?"

Ogushi-shi who's pleased at me showing an interest tells me about various things.

"Let's see, it's not something rare for upper nobles and the wealthy. However, the core part rarely appears in the market since it's something that's made during the era of Ancestor King Yamato."

Looks like automatic carriage that uses the magic power of the rider like I have is uncommon. Magicians seem to have their own private carriage, but they make their pupils operate the carriage since magicians don't like to have their magic power depleted.

For some reason, Ogushi-shi puts an unnatural gap there.
One of the listener, a young man who was either the cousin or the nephew of baron Sokel that was knowledgeable about this matter entered the talk.

"You know that a ruin was discovered five years ago in Kirik Earldom right?"
"As expected of Sir Sokel. You have extensive knowledge. Chevalier Pendragon, as you know, several power engines that are called Golem Hearts were found in the ruin that Sir Sokel mentioned. Earl Kirik has presented those hearts to the royal family, and every year, one of them is bestowed to a noble who has done great meritorious deeds."

Ogushi-shi most likely deliberately didn't talk about the thing in Kirik Earldom so that Sir Sokel could easily join the conversation. I'd like to learn this kind of thing.

Nevertheless, I've heard some good things.
I was going to have Living Armors guard the above ground mansion, I had almost made a commotion.

"That's amazing. Are those kind of ruins often discovered?"
"Ruin discovery is really rare. The ruin that was discovered before that is the one in the mountains of Zettsu Earldom, but that's a story from 30 years ago."

Looks like I'd better keep the undersea ruin I've found recently a secret.

It seems the aerodynamic engine that was sold at the dark auction back then was found from the wreckage of an airship with unknown affiliation. Since he was being evasive with the 'unknown affiliation' part, it doesn't seem to really be unknown.

◇

The banquet was over without any disaster, but I was called by butler-san when I was going to ride the carriage, and then I went to parlor of Viscount Shimen. I'm sorry for Lulu, but she'll have to wait in the carriage for a little bit more. I'm slightly worried, but there doesn't seem to be anyone who'll make a stupid pass at Lulu. Ms. Miteruna told me that Lulu was famous among noble servants as the armed maid who had defeated a big man in the west guild.

"Chevalier Pendragon, I'm sorry for calling you back."

The Viscount gets to the main point after that few words of apology.

"Are you acquainted with the viceroy of this labyrinth city?"
"Yes, we've had a bit in the trade city."
"Judging from the way you speak about it, it seems that there was some problem. That man was originally the heir of a Baronage house that was the branch family of Marquis Ashinen house--"

I already had the information that the Viscount told me from Toruma Memo. However, I added several annotations on the well-known parts. It seems the viceroy succeeded as the Marquis by marrying the Marchioness who had the right.

Thus, he couldn't keep a mistress, and turned toward males and drowned in gambling.

His recent favorite seems to be waging in the underground arena of the trade city. Looks like he's making people kill each other illegally with swords. Moreover I'm surprised to hear that he even expressively prepares the stage director to enliven the killing.

"As such, Marquis Ashinen starves for money to do as he pleases. The one who's providing him that cash is his follower, Baronet Dyukeri."

I see, that's why he likes bribe huh.

As the compensation of providing him with the fund, looks like Marquis Ashinen has let Baronet Dyukeri to have monopoly of magic medicines and magic tools sales in the labyrinth city. Excepting the explorer guild of course.

He can't restrict people bringing those things from outside since it's under the imperial command of the king, but since you need the viceroy permission to open magic shops and alchemy shops, he's able to shut business rivals out it seems. He can't restrict small scale sales from stalls and the like, but if those stalls start to have outstanding sales, his wannabe explorer subordinates will come to them with use of forces.

"Be careful of Baronet Dyukeri. He's a man who would do anything to gain money and raise his house."

Looks like he's doing as he pleases in this labyrinth city since he has the backing of Marquis Ashinen.

"I don't even want to imagine that someone talented like you impaired by that kind of man. That man should already know that you're my acquaintance. He probably won't start a fight, but that man is shrewd. Be careful not to be taken by his plot."

I guess I shouldn't try to win the favor by using my cooking skill?
Let's be careful to at least prevent Baronet Dyukeri eating my cooking.

I leave the Viscount's house after promising to meet again in the Spring Kingdom Conference.
I was slightly surprised that there was a man who was in the carriage where Lulu was waiting, but it seems he's the older brother of Ms. Miteruna. Looks like he was asking about the present condition of Ms. Miteruna from Lulu. I gave him thanks since he seemed to have given various things.

◇

"Hoe? Countermeasures for baronet?"
"Yeah, he's a person who likely will get us rolled up in some troublesome things in this city."
"U~n, I think we can just leave such underling alone though?"

I consult to Arisa who's beside me on my bed. Everyone has their own room in this mansion, but for some reason they always gather in my room at night. While talking, I confiscate the candy stick that Arisa has hidden on her back. Even though I've warned her not to snack before sleeping.

Pochi and the others are clinging in tears to Lulu on the other side of the bed. They fervently gripe about how they were returning home while expecting the promised hamburg steak, yet Lulu was not found anywhere, and there was the simplistic menu that Ms. Miteruna prepared instead. I apologized to Pochi and the others together with Lulu since I was the one who made Lulu work as the coachman.

I tell Arisa the content of the conversation I've had with Viscount Shimen.

"Fuh~n, he's the person who's controlling the medicines and magic tools."
"Yeah, he is."
"That person has the worst reputation among explorers you know."

I imagine that would be so. He's the reason why it's hard to get magic medicines that are their lifeline when there are so few magicians.

"Why don't you might as well act secretly as a mysterious merchant in disguise? You'd destroy him if you sell those absurdly good magic tools and magic medicines right?"

What a belligerent guy. What do you mean by destroy.

"Won't that make it bothersome if I'm marked."
"That's why you disguise yourself. Not as Chevalier Pendragon, but like, the mysterious merchant in black clothing, Bottakuru, or something."

That name is wrong.
You're declaring yourself as someone greedy with that name.
<TLN: The name means 'rip someone off'.>

However, it might be a good idea to disguise myself, use Kuro name, and open a magic tool shop. And if I popularize Airships and Self-Propelled Carriage as Kuro, I won't be conspicuous even if have them.

Let's think about this idea for a bit.
I lie down on the bed and make a new memo pad in the menu. I decide to itemize the advantages and disadvantages of that idea, and examine them.
I've been covered in little girls when I come to myself, but I ignore it since it's the same thing like always.

◇

Early afternoon, I've come to Marquis Ashinen's mansion to attend the tea party.

Everyone besides Lulu who's in charge of the carriage is currently power leveling with Iruna and Jenna in the labyrinth.

There's the Marchioness as one of the members of the tea party of course, and starting with the wife of the younger brother of Earl Haku whom I met yesterday, there are wifes and daughters of nobles. Most of them are married, only the two daughters of the Marchioness and the daughter of Viscount Gohat who's over 20 years old are unmarried. The Marchioness daughters are the plump and the almost-plump ones. They look like they will need servants to push them into the carriage when they're riding one.

The other noteworthy member is the wife of Baronet Dyukeri. Unlike her husband, the atmosphere of the wife is like an unfortunate girl. If she was not fat and around forty years old, she would have likely been a [Beauty]. Apparently, they have a sickly son as the heir.

For some reason, the drill twin tail princess isn't attending. It seems she's

not feeling well, although that doesn't seem like that energetic princess at all. The plump second son of the marquis couple doesn't come too, but whatever about that one.

"My, is this the so-called Castella?"
"It's even more delicious than the hotcake in the royal capital isn't it."
"Mother, I want to eat more."

The Castella is popular. Going as far as preparing the green tea was worthwhile.

And, the one that looks even prouder than me is the Marchioness. She proudly calls herself as the one who first introduces Castella.

This would have been a good tea party if it ended as it was.
It doesn't seem to be going that well.

10-27. Dinner and Personal Connections (2)

Satou's here. In a game, you often already have the item needed for the quest you've just taken. Since it takes time to travel in MMOs, I feel that it's better to collect the item before taking the quest.

◇

Just when the tea party was about the end, Marquis Ashinen who was in good mood appeared.

"Hey everyone, I guess the one over there is Chevalier Pendragon-dono isn't it."
"I am honored to meet your countenance, your excellency Marquis."

I intentionally politely greeted the marquis who had hardened for an instant when he saw me.

My trouble with him is trivial.

It originated from a carriage which had cut in to his carriage during the entry into the trade city. I was made to become the umpire for the duel between the old lower ranked noble who cut in and the Marquis. The result was a complete victory of the Marquis' representative, but he didn't pull back his sword even after I had announced the winner, and the old noble was going to be killed if it kept up, so I stopped it. The Marquis had intended to spill the blood of his fellow noble in the first place, and he seemed to hold a grudge against me who had hindered it.

The person who was in such a trouble with him came while bringing the expensive [Golden Nude Woman Statue] as a present. From his point of view, I probably look like a lower ranked noble who came for an apology while trying to curry his favor.

After lightly clearing his throat, he returned to the smiling face like when he

entered the room, and returned my greeting.

"I'm sorry for my absence the other day even after you've expressively come. I have certainly received your kindly prepared item. It was quite an article."
"It is an honor."

It might have been better if it was a nude man statue instead of nude woman, but it would probably be turned into money anyway.

"By the way Chevalier. I have a plan to make a stadium for Rat Race outside the Labyrinth City, why don't you invest on it."
"That is quite interesting."

I've never heard of rat race, is it something like horse race? I'm interested not in the sense of investing in one, but I'm afraid that many people will ruin themselves if gambling is spread in a place like this labyrinth city.

Before I could give that advice to the Marquis, the Marchioness scolded him.

"Keep the men's talk for later. Now is the time for enjoying teas, and amusing rumor."
"M-my love Reter, please don't be so angry. Chevalier Pendragon, let's talk about the investment for later"

He left the room without finishing his words. His works must have piled up since he's been skipping his official duty for half a month.

◇

After everyone had left the tea party, I was called by the Marchioness's attendant, and guided to a different salon than the one just now.

The Marchioness and the wife of Baronet Dyukeli are there.

"Hoshes, don't you have something to ask Sir Pendragon?"
"B-but..."

The Marchioness pushed the hesitating Hoshes-san--the wife of Baronet Dyukeli. Looks like she's a cousin of the Marchioness. Hoshes-san was really hesitating to speak, but she began to talk little by little as the Marchioness who was beside her pressed her back.

She started and stopped talking, and when she was able to talk smoothly, it was like this.

"Sir Pendragon has been traveling around various regions right? Are you familiar with 『Water of Life』?
"The 『Water of Life』 that I know is a kind of liquor, but what kind of thing are you looking for?"

After widening her eyes from my words, she began to talk about the [Water of Life] with downcast eyes.

"I-it is not a liquor. It is a miraculous medicine which works for all disease."
"We have asked a scholar acquaintance about it, but we only get troubling story like how it's the water drop from a spirit tree that reaches the heaven, or water from melted philosopher's stone. Doesn't the knowledgeable Chevalier know anything about it?"

The Marchioness complemented on the story, maybe she was irritated by Hoshes-san. I searched the materials in the storage, but there was no applicable item. However, I have some ideas about
the [Spirit Tree that Reaches the Heaven], or the [Philosopher's Stone].
I'll ask them to introduce me to their scholar acquaintance next time.

I've found several recipes for medicines that works for all disease, but any one of them needs materials from the world tree and the philosopher's stone. As expected the place of origin is too dangerous if I was to provide them with it.

"I am sorry, but I have never heard such miraculous medicine before. However, I also enjoy doing some compounding myself. Maybe I could offer some advices if I just know what kind of illness it is."
"Have you ever heard of Goblin Disease? It's a mysterious illness that only spreads among nobles and wealthy merchants--"

I look at the books in my storage with the search bar in the menu while listening to the talk. There are some details about the Goblin Disease in the alchemy books I've acquired in the duchy capital. Most are just like how the madam has talked about, it seems to be an incurable diseases that all kinds of curing magic potions are ineffective against. However it doesn't seem to be a fatal disease even though it's incurable. It seems you can't leave the person afflicted alone since they become bedridden.

However there's a certain document which describes that they can be cured if you give them with large quantity of fresh vegetables. It's written that it's just a fake groundless opinion, but if this disease comes from vitamin deficiency, it's possible that the afflicted person may be cured if they eat a lot of fresh vegetables.

The two are being evasive about it, but it's probably the [Sickly Son] of Hoshes-san that's afflicted with the Goblin Disease.

"I had spoken with a great doctor at the duchy capital that--"

With that preface, I talk about eating a lot of vegetables. I can make them the miraculous medicine to get them indebted to me, but I don't like using a sick child, so I tell them the next best solution.

"Would it be cured with such things?"

Hoshes-san seemed to have decided to try it while still half-convinced. I also made a promise to ask my acquaintances at the duchy capital if they could get a hold of the miraculous medicine.

The son will probably be cured just with the diet, but let's make use of this lead up in the unlikely possibility.

◇

A maid-san broke into the room when I was deciding the timing to leave my seat after the talk was over. Of course it was not because she had gone mad.

"It's terrible. Her highness princess isn't anywhere!"
"She's not visiting Geritz's room?"

Even though the Marchioness looked displeased she only asked back after lightly chiding her, maybe because she didn't want to scold a servant in front of a guest.

"T, that is, Geritz-sama is also not in his room."
"That can't be, for Geritz to be not in his room!"

I think there's something wrong with that surprise. Acknowledging her own son to be a hikikomori, that's a bit cruel. I open the map, and try to search the princess and the plump-kun, but they don't seem to be in the labyrinth city.

"Her highness princess was yearning to be an explorer. Perhaps she has entered the labyrinth?"

While replying my words with "That can't be", the Marchioness seemed to have come to the same conclusion, she instructed the servant to go to the explorer guild.

I thought of searching the two in the labyrinth with the map, but unfortunately I couldn't track them since I had not marked them.

The map is good enough to be almost almighty, but in truth it has some limitations. Once a person has appeared in the map list, their information will be updated in real time as long as they don't go outside the map. This will be automatically performed whenever I browse the map even if I'm not in that map. However, when I'm in the same map, if someone goes out and then return, they will be displayed on the list again, but when I'm not in the map when that happens, they will not be displayed on the list.
The only exception is with marking. I can pinpoint the position of people who are marked as long as they are in the map that I've known.
During the initial state of the game, you can only mark one person, and it can be added endlessly by buying premium items. It seems to be in debug mode in my case as the marking numbers is not limited--it's not and all, but checking the map will be hard if I thoughtlessly mark too many people, so I

only mark important people and close friends.

That's why the present locations of the two people are unknown.

I don't know if they're in the labyrinth or outside the city, but I don't think the two have any reason to go outside, so they're most probably in the labyrinth.

The Marchioness had asked me if I could check the vicinity around the labyrinth entrance before I could even begin to talk. I undertook it willingly since that was just what I want.

Right at that time, I receive an urgent communication from Arisa who's in an excursion in the labyrinth. After some replies like we were in telephone like always, she got down to the business.

『We've saved some younger nobles who were attacked by a group of lost thieves-like people, but they can't get up due to the shock from the attack see, so can you bring some soldiers and pick us up if you're still in the Marchioness' mansion?』

Ending right when you just accepted it, this job is too fast. It seems that the princess and the second son of the Marquis are among the young nobles.

I cut the communication after telling Arisa that we would meet them.

◇

According to Arisa, there were seven young nobles including the princess and plump-kun, so I borrowed 10 viceroy soldiers from the Marchioness and went to the labyrinth. Originally, we should have asked permission from the Marquis, but they can't contact him as it seems he's gone somewhere.
When I search the map, he's in a mansion that's located in the pleasure quarter, so he must be going there to give some souvenir to his lover.

"C-chevalier-sama, o-our main duty is guarding the city, so, w-we rarely

ever go into the labyrinth."
"It's alright, leave the fight to me and this maid here, so don't worry."

The captain stutters on his words since the soldiers, including him, are running after the carriage. We're not really going fast, they must be lacking exercise.

Even though there was a little problem in the labyrinth entrance, the soldiers were able to enter the labyrinth despite not having explorer certificates due to the Red Iron Plates that Lulu and I had.

I immediately update the map once we enter the labyrinth. Arisa and the others seem to be in Area 11. I contacted Arisa with Telephone magic. They're not only with the young nobles whom they've saved, but also with the 20 lost thieves they've apprehended. They're currently being attacked by 50 lost thieves who are trying to release those captives, so they're holding in a small room ahead of a passage.

I use a small hand mirror that Lulu has taken from her (Magic Pouch) and invoke the [Signal] magic as a dummy. Other people probably look at it as a communication-type magic item. After talking to Lulu in whispers, I talk to the captain-san.

"I've received a contact from our companions. They've seen a woman with princess-like clothes in Area 11. They have immediately gone to the place of discovery, we should also go there."

One of the soldier shouted, "That knight-killer area!", but the captain-san persuaded them in low voice to become silent, so we began to move. I feel that he looks pale, wonder if he's alright?

I'm advancing the corridor while swiftly dealing with the monsters we encounter using the pebbles on the ground and my fairy sword. I'm only moving at jogging speed, but the soldiers are lagging behind. As even Lulu follows along properly, they should be ashamed as soldiers.

When we've passed through the first division, I announce an information to fire them up after pretending to use the the communication magic item.

"Captain-san, I've received a communication from my companions. They seemed to have safely protected the princess. However, they're under heavy attacks from the lost thieves."
"That's horrible! Let's hurry."

I let the soldiers who have ran out of breath to drink stamina recovery magic medicines, and then we resume our advance.

10-28. Princess and Lost Thieves

I'm bored noja.

Even though I've come to the labyrinth city and all, I'm not allowed to go out of the viceroy mansion even once, this isn't what is promised.

If I don't get stronger by defeating monsters in the labyrinth, I can't become the hero's companion.
But even if I go alone, I surely won't be a match to monsters.

I stare at the dagger with Nooroku family crest and heave a deep sigh. Yes, I got a sprain on the second day of my sword training, and I couldn't even make a spark after training magic continuously for two years. The only things that I can be proud of are embroidery and lacework.

When I was walking on the only place I could freely do so, the courtyard, I heard the voices of boys on the arbor beyond the thickets.

"Uwah, it's really the Bronze Plate! Jeans, you're amazing!"
"Did you make your cousin who has Red Iron Plate that you mentioned before to take you along?"
"Yeah. As the eldest son of an Earl family, I think having at least the Bronze Plate is necessary."

A light brown short haired young man who looks a bit cruel pridefully replies to the two boys who are pressing on him. The plump black haired one should be the fourth son of Baron Larupod, Peison-dono, and the the slightly clever-looking short blond hair should be the third son of Viscount Gohat, Dirun-dono.

The second son of the Marquis, Geritz-dono, and his follower, the second son of Baron Notoke, Lulam-dono don't seem like they find it interesting, they spew venom.

"Fu, fuhn. You must have thrown stones behind your cousin anyway right?"
"Right, right! There's no way you can defeat monsters when you've never

even won against Merian with sword."

When the eldest daughter of Baronet Dyukeli, Merian, heard it, she quickly drew her sword and put it on the tip of Lulam-dono's nose.

"Are you saying that my sword is no match for monsters?"
"T, that's not it. I don't mean that, so please put your sword back."

You shouldn't have said careless remark if you're going to beg with cramped face like that. Or is it just how friends act with each other?

I'm a bit envious noja.

After listening to their fun conversations while feeling envious, apparently, they've decided to go to the labyrinth with just them.

"Then I'll pick you all with a carriage tomorrow, so everyone wait after wearing your weapons and armors okay. Please take care not to get found out by your family yourself. I'll prepare everything beside your armors and weapons, so everyone turn in three silver coins each."
"Eh~ that's expensive."

Lulam-dono complains to the experienced Jeans-dono's order.

"Then, can you escape from monsters when they've surrounded you without a smoke ball and a flash ball?"
"It's fine, there's no way we will turn our back from monsters with this many warriors."
"Exactly, we also have Dirun the magician. Dirun can use his wind magic to rout monsters if they surround us."
"Well, there is no monster that my wind magic cannot cut."

Jeans-dono seemed to have been taken by everyone's confident attitude, he lowered it to one silver coin each while heaving.

"I've heard it noja."
"P, princess."

Please take me with you. I couldn't hold that feeling, and jumped out in

front of everyone.

"Geritz-dono, Jeans-dono, please noja. Could you take me with you?"

I ask with teary eyes while inclining my head cutely. This would have been the finishing strike if it was my father the king.

Geritz-dono and Jeans-dono couldn't bear against this just like my father the king, they granted my wish with reddened faces.

◇

"I don't feel good noja. I don't need the breakfast today. Leave me be alone until noon."

My foster sister who had been raised together with me since we were born immediately seen through my staged illness, but it was good that she interpreted it as me wanting to oversleep.

"Princess, are you ready?"
"Merian-dono, please help me a bit."

Why is wearing this clothes so hard noja. My arms and head come out of the same place, I can't move noja. I didn't think that I would face such a challenge even before entering the labyrinth!　Truly the labyrinth city! What a frightening city nanoja.

After Merian-dono helped me put on the thick horse-riding clothes that she had brought and I wore the thin mantle, I immediately feel like I've become an explorer, my heart is exhilarated. It's complete when I hang the flat white mask she's given that covers half of my face.

"How is it?"
"It really suits you. Then, let us go."
"Umu, to the labyrinth!"

◇

"I'd like to register them as explorers."
"Umm, is it for special registration?"
"No, for general one please."

Jeans-dono is the only who doesn't wear a mask since he's already an explorer. For some reason, an eyebrow of the receptionist lady is twitching. Maybe she's tired?

"Then, please your name."
"『Mysterious Noble』 Geritz."
"『Black Storm』 Peison."
"『Strong Sword』 Lulam."
"『Hero's Follower』 Mitia."

Why? Dirun-dono and Merian-dono don't continue giving their name after me and everyone else. When I looked back, they give their name while sighing. Why didn't they give their [Second Name]?

"Yes then, please take these Wood Plates. Do you need an explanation?"
"It's unnecessary."

Jeans-dono distributed the Wood plates that had been given by the representative.

Umumu. Why is my lips loosening noja. I didn't think that I would be this happy just from this tree chip. I want to dance, but I would be a disgrace of Norooku princess if I can't keep calm here.

When I raised my view, everyone was having a broad grin besides Jeans-dono. Of course Dirun-dono and Merian-dono aren't excepted either noja.

◇

"Hey, Jeans. There isn't any enemy is it."
"It really is. We've only passed other explorers once in a while. Where's the monster."
"I can't do anything about it even if you complain to me. The competitions for monster hunting are furious in the first area after all. When I came here before, I followed a retainer knight who went scouting at the border of area 11, and defeated a 『Maze Moth』."

They let out their dissatisfaction for having been let down by the labyrinth after getting enthusiastic about it to Jeans-dono noja.

"Then, let's go to that area 11."
"I've heard that area 11 is a dangerous area that has an infamous monster called knight killer though?"
"That's why we stop at the border right?"
"I'll chop the knight killer with my magic if they come."
"I'll pierce it with my rapier before that happens."

Knight killer is it. Is there a monster that can defeat the like of big men with metal armor which fully wraps their bodies?　It must be a gigantic monster.

Everyone is reliable noja. As expected of young nobles who have been studying martial art and magic art since they're young. Truly reliable.

◇

Even when we occasionally discover a monster, some young-looking explorers in shabby clothes are desperately engaging it, there is no monster left.

"Sheesh, those commoners are vulgar."
"It's just as Geritz-sama's said! Shall I lend my hand for them?"
"You can't do that, Lulam. Snatching monsters that other explorers are fighting inside the labyrinth is a serious breach of etiquette. If you do such a thing, your noble honor will fall as low as a lost thief."

Jeans-dono rebukes the two who were cursing the explorers.

"Hey, look at that Sign Monument. Isn't this already area 11?"
"Eh? That shouldn't be. There are a lot of monsters on the border of area 11--you're right, moreover, looks like we've even come extremely close to the interior."
"Should we head back?"
"Isn't it fine, let's keep going. There are a lot of commoner parties since a while ago anyway. It must be alright."

Jeans-dono and Dirun-dono were having careful opinions, but since most approved the strong-willed Merian-dono's opinion, we decided to continue advancing.

We found that at the place nearly one hour ahead of the place earlier.

"Look at that the color of that Sign Monument! There's something strange about it."
"Everyone! Prepare for battle. That's the sign of Gushing Hole. Monsters are coming."

The Sign Monument which shines white occasionally flickers like a candle fire in red. As if lured by everyone who has drawn their swords out, I also grip my dagger.

◇

"Haa!"

Merian-dono's rapier pierce through the Maze Moth's wing. Peison-dono's and Lulam-dono's short swords have cut the empty air. Disappointing noja.

"As expected of Merian."
"There's nothing that can avoid that rapier."

Before Jeans-dono could cut with his great sword, Dirun-dono invoked [Air Blade] and cut one wing of the Maze Moth, snatching it from Jeans-dono.

"That's dangerous! Warn everyone before you use magic!"
"I don't hit (you) right. You must adapt to the circumstance during battle."

In order to finish the Maze Moth that has been dropped to the ground, Geriz-sono swing his one-handed sword unsteadily.

"Cut it too Princess since it's alright now."
"I, I understand noja."

I also draw my dagger and participate in the Maze Moth extermination. I was surprised to see that the stomach was hard enough to prevent dagger from penetrating it even though it looked so soft.

"We did it! We've defeated monsters!"
"Hey hey, I wonder how many levels are raised?"
"Now, let's go for the next."

A voice that seems like a poured cold water reaches everyone who's excited from their first monster.

"There's no next time time for ye' guys."

Several people come out of the shadow and surround us while carrying weapons. A big bald man who's carrying a three-pronged spear on his back approaches while laughed vulgarly.

"Lost thieves huh!"
"That's right, noble young men and women. Yer' adventures is over. You can die here now and become feeder for monsters."
"I won't let it! Can you avoid my rapier?"

The bald big man casually caught the sharp stab of Merian-dono's rapier with his three-pronged spear, and broke it.

"You stupid? Ye' think yer' playing sword could reach us?"
"Uh, that can't be. Blocking against Merian's rapier."
"It's over. Save me, father..."
"Mother, I'm sorry."

This is bad noja, everyone's heart is going to break nanoja.
I encourage everyone as loud as I can. Please allow the shaking in that voice.

"Don't give up, someone must be coming to save us noja!"
"Hou? Who is coming to save you?"

The bald man rudely catches the nape of my neck, and draws his filthy face close. Uuu, it's scary noja. It's smelly noja.

My limbs become cold and shaking. The rasping sound from a while ago was coming from <<my>> clattering teeth.

"Look now, don't cry and say it?　Who's coming to save you?"
"Of course it's the ally of justice you know?"

A little girl's voice cut into the audacious man's voice.
Has she come to help?!

The voice and figure of a little girl that's not suited to be in this place give courage to me. I pushed the bald man with my hands with all my might. I can't aim to become the hero's follower if I let myself become a drag to someone who's coming save me after all!

Three demi-humans who appear while leaving red trails of light easily get rid of the lost thieves like they're breaking dead trees apart. That scene was one-sided like it was some kind of play.

"I thank you for your rescue. I am the princess of Norooku, Mitia."
"Arara, the princess of the western end huh. We are 『Pendragon』. We're going to take care of this, so wait a bit okay."

Noroku is of the western end she said?　Does this girl come from a country in the center union?
As the 10 years old girl has promised, they have taken us out of our crisis--

"Reinforcement."
"Arisa, it's the enemy's reinforcement. I suggest to hold a defense line in the small room ahead for the safety of the protection targets."

"Okay, I'll contact master for reinforcement once we've moved there."

--or so it seems, but the lost thieves are coming one after another, we have been cornered into a small room.

The lost thieves persistently and constantly keep invading the small room. The most terrifying thing above all is the countless monsters they've brought along with the assault, it has become a [Train]. We would have been trampled by the countless monsters if there wasn't Nana-dono's impregnable nature magic. I didn't think that monsters would be so dreadful. It's so furious, it even makes Jeans-dono and the firm Merian-dono can't stand up in the corner of the room.

The time until the reinforcement arrives feels really long even though it should have been short.
And then, I met that boy.

10-29. Lost Thief Extermination

Satou's here. There were Samurai and Thieves appearing as enemies in the labyrinth PC game that I played a long time ago. I didn't mind about it at that time, but I wonder if they were living in the labyrinth?

◇

"I'll be arriving there in 15 minutes."
『Ho~i, we're waiting.』

I check the condition on Arisa's side with [Telephone].

Looks like the lost thieves are besieging Arisa and the others, and it has become a stalemate. They run away when Liza and the others come out, and during that chance, they break into the small room by using the crevice-like small passages and going along the dark labyrinth wall.
Moreover, an upper level 30 bearded man who seems to be the lost thieves boss and a unit of paralyzing blowgun users are troublesome, so they can't quite go on attack. It should have been easy with the abilities of Arisa and the others, but they're probably trying to make it non-lethal.
And then, the lost thieves boss who seems to have grown impatient with the stalemate uses his henchmen to lure monster 'train' to attack the small room where Arisa and the others are.

Checking on the map, their stamina and magic power have only decreased for a bit, no one seems to be hurt.

◇

Lulu and me are running in the corridor while taking the viceroy's guards along.

"M, master, in the front, another..."
"Lulu, don't look at it."

There is a scattered remain of a lost thief, half-eaten by monsters, lying on the middle of the corridor. I wonder how many are there with this? Obviously, luring the monster train means risking your life for it. Looking at the Collar of Subordination on his neck, this man is probably a slave.

I cut down the bee-like monsters that are swarming on the corpse with my fairy sword. They're soft like a paper despite their hard looking appearance.

While we're advancing on the corridor, Lulu and I defeat the small fry monsters from the train. The soldiers behind us have been quiet since a while ago, looks like this pace is hard for them.

Some lost thieves are reflected on the edge of my radar.

I shoot [Remote Stun] the moment we turn on the corner. The targets are the ones encircling Arisa and the others. Unlike [Magic Hand], the Remote Stunn orbs can be seen, so I aimed with the angle where the soldiers behind couldn't see it.
At the same time, I throw a bundle of wire from my storage and use [Magic Hand] to bind the thieves. It was harder than I thought.

We arrive at the place where the lost thieves are lying on the ground, tied.

"Chevalier-sama, these people are?"
"They're probably the lost thieves that my vassals have arrested. Sorry but it seems they've just been binded, but not tied on something. We're bringing them to the surface later, so can you tie them to those pillars over there?"
"Yes! Oy, gather those thieves in one place!"

I get the soldier to tie the lost thieves on the nearby pillar-like structures. While leaving a-bit-under-20 lost thieves to the soldiers, Lulu and I continue on the corridor. The captain and half of the soldiers are going to follow later. There doesn't seem to be any monster from here to where Arisa and the others are.

I hear weapon clashing sounds from ahead.
We run past the curved passage. I can see two red light intersecting in the darkness ahead of the passage.

One of them is Liza. I feel that the red light doesn't only come out from her spear, but also extends to her armor, wonder if it's just my imagination. Maybe it's due to that that her remaining magic power is severe.

The other one is a bearded man who seems to be the lost thief boss. Even though he should be human, he looks like a dwarf. The thing on his arm must be a magic axe. He's the second person I've seen using a battle axe after Elder Dohar.

"Master~?" "Nanodesu!"

Since Pochi and Tama are waving their hands greatly at me from behind Nana who's protecting the small room entrance from the monsters, I wave back at them.

The boss whom Liza was fighting deliberately took some distance away from her, and threw a flash ball he had taken from his bosom to the ground.

It's a manga-like situation.

Just before the flash ball hits the ground, I move before Lulu and protect her eyes from the intense light. It was slightly dazzling, but thanks to Light-intensity Adjustment skill, I wasn't blinded.

"Releasing your sword from your dominant hand, what an amateur!"

The boss who's put his back behind the flash is quickly approaching with Physically Reinforced speed that equals Nana, trying to take me hostage. Maybe I should have some fun by letting him take me hostage and have Liza saves me.

His big arm that's covered in bristle was reaching toward my neck before he caught me. At the same time, he pushed out his magic axe's handle toward my solar plexus.

He intends to seize me after making me faint huh.

Stinks.

A strong stench pierces into my nasal cavity.

Nope, nope.

I don't want this stinking hand catches me.

>[Stench Resistance Skill Acquired]

Before that thought even appears in my mind, I crush his arm and kick the magic axe with my knee. While my knee is still folded, I lightly kick his belly with my toes. A small sound of escaped air that's not even a scream reaches my ears. I block the smelly saliva with <<Flexible Shield>>, and I use [Deodorant] on his body to erase the stench before he flies away.

After rotating once in the air, he landed just before Lulu behind me. Lulu holds down the boss on the floor like she's flowing with the self-defense skill she's learned in the elf hometown even while being surprised by the boss that has suddenly appeared in front of her.

I capture the remaining lost thieves in the nearby passages with [Remote Stun] and wires before the flash disappears. The soldiers shouldn't notice since it hasn't entered into their views yet. While I'm at it, I use [Mana Drain] on the boss to prevent him from struggling.

Once the flash disappears, there's the figure of Lulu who has easily apprehended the boss before everyone's eyes.

Liza who's quickly rushed here binds the boss with the wire I've given her. I was a bit worried with the boss' broken arm that was dangling, but I decided to leave it alone when I thought about the corpses he had sacrificed for the monster train.

After Liza has tied him up, let's snatch the ring that seems to be for invoking magic from the boss' finger, and the hidden weapons. I point out the things she needs to collect. Lastly, I take out a [Magic-sealing Chain] from the bag,

pass it to Liza, and let her tie the boss more with it. I happened to notice this item when the arson noble was arrested, and then bought it in the duchy capital when I was getting the scrolls. It's commonly sold in magic tool shops in the duchy capital. It's 10 gold coins for one chain, quite a price.

"Master, I am very sorry for I cannot stop the thieves."

After apologizing me for not being able to stop the boss, Liza praises Lulu. I catch Pochi and Tama who've come running, and go toward Arisa and the others while joining hands. I leave the thieves lying on the floor of the corridor along the way to the soldiers besides the captain-san.

Since the magic axe is deeply stuck in the ceiling and doesn't seem like it'll come down, I use [Magic Hand] and retrieve it into the Storage.

>Title [Natural Enemy of Lost Thief] Acquired
>Title [Guardian of Order] Acquired

◇

There are countless bodies of monsters in front of the small room where Arisa and the others are holding on.

"Sorry for being late."
"Master, I was scared～"
"Mwu?"

Arisa who's speaking in odd manner while clinging to me is off-putting. See, even Mia has a 'goodness gracious' face on. After she hugged me, she whispered the situation to me. It sure helps, but I think the strange acting is unnecessary.

The room is 20 tatami-mat wide with uneven stone pavements. On the left side of the room--where it can't be seen from the passage, the princess and the plump-kun, and also five young nobles are sitting. One of the young nobles is a girl. There are 25 lost thieves tied up on the right side of the room. It has increased by five who are probably survivors from the monster

train. The ones that have reasonable amount of HP despite having their clothes reddened with blood must have been healed by Mia's healing magic, I think.

Strangely, even though the young nobles should not have been injured, all of them look like they're going to die. They were probably really scared after getting surrounded by the lost thieves, and then attacked by the monster swarm. The two people from [Beautiful Wings] look better, but it feels like they're standing with willpower.

"Geritz-dono, I've come by the request of the Marchioness. The guards have also come too, let's safely get back to the surface with all your friends."
"T, thank you."

I told that to the exhausted looking Plump-kun with a smile. I thought he was going to say something like, "You should've come sooner", but he only said a normal thank after nodding a bit. I take out a wet towel in the storage from the bag, and pass it to plump-kun. I've put a lot of these towels in the storage since Pochi and Tama often dirty their faces during meals.

He looked blank for a second, but after I told him that it was to clean his face with so he could feel refreshed, he began to wipe his face awkwardly.

The princess who's sitting beside him also has some dirt sticking on her face that seems to be from blood spurt. I take another wet towel like the one for plump-kun but since her eyes look dead, I gently wipe her face with it.

"You have also done well your highness. Your cute face is dirty."
"...U, umu, thank you, for the rescue nanoja."

Looks like she's been refreshed after I wiped her face, willpower surges back from the hazy expression of the princess. I had wiped her face without caring since it was a loli face, her lipstick and makeover had come off.

Let's gloss over the failure with a smile. Although feeble, the princess faintly smiles back, so let's consider it a good thing.

The other young nobles have also recovered enough to complain, "I'm tired" or "I'm hungry" from the effect of wet towels even though their conditions

are like empty shells. It might be rude of me to say this, but unexpectedly, every one of these youths properly said their thanks.

Captain-san seemed to consider that taking 70 people of the lost thieves back to the surface was going to be difficult, he suggested to cut their necks here and now, but I rejected it.

I connect every 10 lost thieves with wires, and let each of our vanguards guard each group. That's 40 people. Lulu and I are in charge of guarding 10 people who are especially high leveled, while the soldiers are to be in charge of a little over 20 young lost thieves. The princess and the young nobles are to be guarded by the two from Beautiful Wings.

Now then, the lost thieves probably will try to escape along the way, so let's threaten them. I've put gags on the mouths of the ten high-leveled ones beforehand so they won't say unnecessary things.

"Hear me! You lost thieves! I will bring you to the surface now. Someone who try to escape--"

The remain of a Horn Hopper that has been skinned beforehand with Mia's magic is burned with acid magic. The lost thieves are looking with a pale face toward the crumbling remain of the monster while a smoke with unpleasant smell is rising from it.

"--is going to be burned alive with acid magic like such, or become a transfigured figure from this decomposing wyvern poison that's worse than death."

>[Threaten Skill Acquired]

I took out a bottle that's been intentionally shaped sinisterly and showed it to the lost thieves. This bottle is the work of a young artist in the duchy capital that I've acquired, I make use of its appearance. It seems my deception skill's kicked in, the lost thieves seems to have believed my words.

30 soldiers from the Labyrinth Army had come as a reinforcement before the lost thieves could try to escape, so we were able to get back to the

surface without any problem. Fortunately, no monster tried to attack us, probably because it was a large group with more than 100 people.

Now then, after I hand over the young nobles to their guardians, it would be mission complete.

10-30. Lost Thief Extermination (2)

Satou's here. There's a wonderful item that raises your experience gain by 200% in MMOs and browser games. Implementing the mechanic in the game was unexpectedly easy since it just needed an added coefficient during the time you gain experience points. I'm interested just what is the level up medicine that I saw in the black market composed of.

◇

One of the soldier immediately went ahead alone as a messenger after we met the the labyrinth army troops, so three high level guild staffs were already waiting in front of the labyrinth gate. Although I said high levels, they're only around 30-35.

"T, this guy is the 『Mad Magic Axe』 Rudaman?!"
"That Rudaman the Lost Thief King?"

For some reason, the high level staffs look awfully surprised when they checked the bearded daruma boss with a Yamato Stone. Lost Thief King uh, wonder if it's like the lesser version of Pirate King?

"Chevalier-sama, you've done an outstanding work. This Rudaman is a fiendish lost thief who have turned the table against many subjugation units."
"His reward prize should be more than 100 gold coins now."

About as much as one magic sword huh. The magic axe that I've taken just before seems quite expensive too.

"Well then, Chevalier-sama. We will have to take the lost thieves to the west guild, please come to the guild later."
"Yes, I understand. Best regards."

The bearded daruma boss is taken away by the three high level staffs. The small fry lost thieves are being made to check their statuses with the Yamato stone in a group of five by the labyrinth army.

The reason why I didn't go with them was because half of the young nobles got exhausted from climbing the meandering great stairway, thus I needed to wait them to come out while they were being carried by the soldiers.

Jeans and Merian were the only two that had come back to themselves, the princess was shouldered by Lulu. Every member besides me and Lulu said "There's still some quota for today." and then they returned to Area 11. The two people from Beautiful Wings were screaming, but they were dragged by Pochi and Tama who took their hands.

"Satou-dono! My level has been raised noja! Labyrinth is really amazing."
"Congratulations, Mitia-sama. How about Jeans-dono and Merian-dono?"

Princess Mitia had returned from confirming her status with the Yamato stone. If she could go back on her feet in this short amount of time, she might be apt to become an explorer. I also asked the two people who have arrived with her, but Jeans shook his head and denied it.

"No, we've only defeated one Maze Moth."

Merian who was brooding over something asked me like she had readied herself.

"Chevalier-sama. How should I do to become as strong as your retainers?"
"Training and actual combat. Those girls asked some famous martial artists and fairykin masters in the duchy capital and trained without sparing any time to sleep, and they also had extreme actual combat where they almost died in the labyrinth of this city and another one."

Un, I probably didn't lie. The power leveling thing is a secret.

"I see, so it really is about actual combat..."
"I'm warning you just in case, if the present you try to do actual combats in order to become stronger, you would die in not even a month."
"Wha, what do you know about me!"

I was worried at Merian who was muttering like she was obsessed, and warned her. Looks like she was shocked by my remark, she reflexively showed her dissatisfaction emotionally.

I know her actual nature only superficially, but looking at her level and skill, she would die without a doubt if she was surrounded by multiple monsters. Her level is 3, she only has Etiquette skill.
By the way, even though Jeans beside her has Bronze Plate, his level is 4, and he only has Social and Horse-riding skills. It's a mystery how he got the Bronze Plate.

"It's probably good if you hide your social position and train for a bit in a dojo. I think it'd be good if you re-challenge the labyrinth once you've gained your confidence back after working hard for a month."
"Do you also want to say that my sword is a play?"
"Merian, leave it at that. Your anger is misplaced at Sir Pendragon."

Merian was going to say more, but she apologized with reluctant face after Jeans admonished her. She seemed to be interested with the training, she asked me which dojo should she go. I saw some open dojo-like places in several vacant lands, but since I didn't know which one was good, I asked the staff-san.

"A reputable dojo?"
"Yes, if possible it'd be good if the instructor is a former explorer, or someone from the army."
"Then I recommend Horun-dono's dojo 『Labyrinth Self-defense Style』."
"Labyrinth self-defense style huh. Isn't there a dojo with more actual combat training?"

It seemed Merian was dissatisfied with the female staff's recommendation, she asked about another dojo while tampering with the rapier on her waist. The female staff seems to have expected that reaction, she corrects Merian's misunderstanding while smiling.

"Ufufu, Labyrinth Self-defense style is for actual combat you know. By self-defense it means emphasizing on your own safety as the priority, evading the opponent's attack to prevent it from injuring you. Since in the labyrinth,

having injury directly relates to the danger to your life."
"That makes sense. Even just getting your foot injured means that you can't evade, and you'd be killed in the blink of an eye."

It seems Merian has decided to try going to that dojo, although it's unknown whether it's because she has understood the female staff's explanation, or my follow-up.

◇

I lead the young nobles who have finally come out to leave the labyrinth. Four of them who were being carried by the soldiers kept being carried until the west gate.

Six fine carriages are waiting outside the west gate.

"You fool!"

Baronet Dyukeli who was the foremost to step up slapped his daughter's cheek with his palm. It seemed to be a relatively merciless slap, Merian dropped her knees to the ground while blood came out of the edge of her mouth.

"Chevalier Pendragon. I thank you for your help. I will pay this debt, without fail."

After telling me so, Baronet Dyukeli took Merian like he was dragging her to the carriage and went home.

The ones who came for the other young nobles were only the butlers and the servants, so they boarded the carriage and went home without any argument. The differences in accordance to their houses are great, but they have one thing in common; the ones who have come for them are not their parents, but the servants. They only came to pick the young nobles as instructed by their masters, but they told me that the family heads would like to say their thanks another day.

The butler of the Marchioness relayed the Marchioness words, asking me to come to the mansion later. I said to the butler, "I need to report this matter to the explorer guild, so I will be intruding in the evening."

◇

I've visited the west guild to explain the situation, but for some reason I have been summoned to the guildmaster's room.

"Thanks fer' coming Satou-dono. We had difficulty dealing with that Rudaman guy. I can't raise your rank Mithril as expected, but I'll let ya have preferential treatment if we get some delicious info."
"Ha, thank you very much."
"What's with that spiritless reply."

The guild master who was in good mood was going to hug me, I smoothly evaded her.
That bearded daruma would immediately made his subordinates became decoys if the fight turned into his disadvantage, on top of that, he had many hideouts, so the guild subjugation unit couldn't pin down them.

"Your reward should be quite considerable from the prize money and the selling-off of the lost thieves who become slaves. Don't forget to to get it from the cashier later."

The guildmaster added another words with a vulgar smile, "Those are some uhauha sum of money." This person is well suited for this kind of smile.

"Will all the lost thieves get turned into slaves?"
"Yeah, they will be working in the coal as crime slaves. Guys like Rudaman who has people with grudge against them will be executed publicly after they're turned into slaves. This time, the other one among the subjugated thieves beside Rudaman who will get the treatment is his aid, the vice-boss."

Originally, the work in the coal is already hazardous enough even without the public execution stuff, it seesms they will only live for three years there.

I'd like to protect some children who are around junior high school students among them, but since they all have [Murderer] in their Reward and Punishment, I ended up not saying anything unnecessary when I thought about their victims and the bereaved family.

Ushana-san the secretary entered right at that time. It seems that Rudaman wants to negotiate with the guildmaster. For some reason, the conversation flowed in the direction of me coming with the guildmaster to the dungeon where Rudaman was confined.

◇

"So, what do you have to say?"
"I'm looking fer' mercy appeal."
"Stop saying stupid things. You will be executed publicly."

Rudaman is confined in a particularly strict section of the dungeon. He's tied with Magic-sealing chain inside a room with sturdy iron bars. He negotiated with an arrogant face without looking like he was in pain from the broken arm.

"That might be the proper thing to do, but I can't stand becoming an exhibition for the shitty nobles and the clean citizens. Won't ya put me into Violet?"
"Look back at your own crimes. Your unsightly head will be shown on the severed head stand of the west gate."

It seems there's quite a barbaric custom. Is this Edo era. I don't want to approach the west gate for the time being. By the way, Violet is a unit of the kingdom army that's composed of crime slaves, it seems it's a unit with high disposable rate that's specially used to fight giant monsters or as the decoy. Ushana-san told me.

"Would the kind noble over there grant me wish? You subjugated us lost thieves without killing anyone and purposely brought us alive. You don't like letting someone die right?"
"I don't like killing people, but I don't have any intention of denying a villain

from getting executed."
"I'll tell ya an information that'll interest ya."

Information that will interest me huh. Might as well hear it.

"It depends on the content. I'll let you negotiate if it's really an interesting info."
"There are a lot of female children baggage carriers whom explorers handed over as sacrifices in our hideout. And those people are making Fiend Drugs as ordered by us."
"Fiend Drug you said!?"
<TLN: Fiend or 'Majin'.>

The guildmaster who was acting as a spectator in silent interrupted.

Since some threatening name came out, I search it in the documents I have. Fiend Drug seems to be a medicine that was originally developed to bestow humans with physical strength enough to fight monsters in a hand-to-hand combat. If you drink this medicine, you will be strengthened enough to close 10 level gap, on top of that, it has an effect of halving the experience needed to level up. It was spread in the kingdom in the blink of an eye.

However, this medicine has an atrocious trap laid. If you regularly drink this medicine and keep leveling up, you'll become a grotesque monster. It seems that you will become a monster with 50% probability with 10 level up, and 90% probability with 20 level up. The level up is nice, but there's no meaning to it if you end up become a monster. However, looks like there are a lot of people who yield to the temptation in this harsh world.

I'm bothered with the sacrifice thing, but let's postpone it.

"If you leave them alone, the women and children who are cultivating field in our hideout will be killed. The killer is a noble, the same as you."
"In other words, the one who needs the Fiend Drug is that noble right?"
"Yeah, we use it sometimes too though."

Rudaman wants to be put into the Crime Slaves Unit (Violet) in exchange for the information of the secret cultivation place. Still, didn't he carelessly talk too much? I can't help but feel that the Negotiation and Cross-

examination skills had been accidentally used.

"So, what's the noble name?"
"The fool who should be able to tell me that has stupidly died see. I know the name of the underling who acts as the agent to sometimes bring us food and salt though. That stingy bastard was called Besso or something. Ya tail that guy, and the other side should get in contact with him."
"Either way, there's no meaning unless we catch them in act huh. Guildmaster, what would you do?"

The guildmaster had a pensive look on her face for a while, but it seemed that she judged that it'd be dangerous if the Fiend Drug spread in the labyrinth city, she accepted Rudaman's deal. I couldn't help even if I remained here any longer, so I bid my farewell to the guildmaster.

The prize money and the slave sales amount to 160 gold coins. I put it in the bag without counting it. For now, I marked Besso before I forgot.

Fumu, forbidden magic drug huh.

10-31. Fiend Drug

Satou's here. When I hear the word 'disguise', I remember about the famous thief protagonist who's good at it. I think that a lot of Japanese people remember about the gesture of which he tears off his fake face from the chin. The faces were thrown away thoughtlessly, but in actuality, making them needs some quite laborious works.

◇

Well then, let's find the culprit.

I open the map and search. The search term is [Fiend Drug].

The search discovers three points. Both of the first two points seem to be owned by explorers each. The last one is probably the catch. Nearly 100 fiend drugs are stocked there.

It's the mansion of the noble that I've just met during the viscount dinner the other day, Sir Sokel. I thought that it would have been Baronet Dyukeli's mansion, this is unexpected.

I check on the detail of Sir Sokel's mansion.

I've confirmed that he has the drugs stocked in a hidden room in his mansion. There are slaves with Compounding and Alchemy skills inside that hidden room, so there's no mistake about it.

I mark Sir Sokel, his servants and those slaves. There are 20 people in total. Among them, one is in the downtown with people who have various Reward and Punishment. Those people seem to belong to a criminal guild called [Goblin Claw]. They were a large group of around 60 people, marking them would make my map too busy, so I ended up only marking the boss and the three high leveled ones.

They're probably going to destroy evidences and kill the witnesses. That means the ones in danger are probably Rudaman in the dungeon, the lost thief executives, and the proxy, Besso.

Leaving aside Besso and his cohorts, I'd like to get the carriers and slaves who are working in the labyrinth hideout into safety. However, this one should be fine even if I don't do something immediately. I had searched the lost thieves hideouts when I first entered the labyrinth, they're quiet deep in the interior. If they could prepare a force that could assault such a place, they would have directly attacked the guild to kill the witnesses.

The alchemist in Sir Sokel's mansion is also in danger, but they wouldn't easily kill him. He's an important person who can create the fiend drug, and they shouldn't be able to replace the alchemist so easily.

Now then, I've already finished searching the culprit, let's leave it to the guildmaster to take care of them.

I used invisibility and hiding (skills) like when I was invading the duke castle, and intruded the guildmaster's room, then I left a mysterious document that read "The mastermind is Sir Sokel?" Just in case, I also added a postscript that described the hidden room in Sir Sokel's mansion and the lair of Besso and his cohorts.

After I finished my business, I took Lulu out of the explorer guild.

◇

"Master, where are we going?"
"We're going to the mansion."

It's still 2-3 hours before evening. There's something I want to do before visiting the Marchioness.

"Welcome bacc, bac."
"Welcome back, Lulu-sama."
"I'm back, Hoho and Kitona."

Looks like the children who were doing some work in the front yard could see the carriage coming to the mansion, they ran to greet us. After getting me down in the front yard, Lulu passed the rein to Kitona who had climbed to the coachman's stand, and went to the stable while teaching her how to operate the carriage.

"Welcome back, master."
"Yeah, I'm back. How are the children doing?"
"Yes, the five bedridden children have no problem doing anything besides manual labors. Roji and Ani still have some problem with their speech, but they have a good memory and they're full of motivation above all, they will probably become a full-fledged cleaning lady sooner than I thought."

I was only planning to hire them temporarily, but it might be good to let them continue working under Ms. Miteruna officially. I'll talk about it with Ms. Miteruna if there's no problem in half a moon.

After receiving some more reports, I go to the basement. I instructed Ms. Miteruna to not let anyone get close since I want to concentrate.

I've put books that I've bought in Seryuu city and Duchy capital in the basement study room. Their contents are beginner magic books that are overlapping with each other.

I shut the bolt-shaped lock on the door, and teleport to the Mansion of Ivy. I informed Lulu that I had teleported to the Mansion of Ivy with Telephone.

◇

"Huh? Are you not with Misanalia-sama? Br-, Satou-dono."
"Yeah, Mia is working hard in the labyrinth. I've come to use the workshop."

I head to the workshop accompanied by Leriril who looks bored.

"Artificial skin huh, another weird thing."
"Yeah, I need it for a bit."

I've come to the workshop in order to make the disguise set. People will doubt the identity of an unknown masked person no matter what. Therefore, I thought of making a fake face under the mask this time. A great person once said that if something is hidden, people will want to uncover it. <TLN: This is probably a reference of something, can't put my finger on it atm.>

The thing about artificial skin is recorded in the Trazayuya document. It's an old record that's written even before the homonculus manufacture, it seems to be developed for living dolls use that work as a nanny.

First, mix the culture fluid.
It was just a world tree sap diluted with 100 times the water, so it was immediately finished.

Next, drop the original somatic cell for the artificial skin to the culture fluid. Since Leriril looked really bored, I took one drop of blood from the tip of her finger.

I operate the culture tank that's connected to the super advanced alchemy instrument. It's actually easy since the detailed procedures are written in the document. Since it needs 30 minutes to complete even with the rapid culture, let's do another work in parallel.

First, the wig. I make it white hair and long enough to cover my eyes. I make only the bangs in black since its purpose is to make an impression.

There's still some time, so let's make the clothes and the shoes next.

I take out a cloth made of Yuriha fiber dyed in black from the storage, and arrange it into clothes. I put some shoulder pads in the jacket to prevent sloping shoulders. For the white gloves, I've gone a bit overboard by sewing pentagrams from the Green Silk thread that has been dipped in Blue Liquid on it. Finally, I prepare the sleeveless inverness coat, and it's complete.

It's the pre-war schoolboy uniform style that would make Arisa drool if she saw it. I had also prepared the hat, but it'd be too overdone if I also put on Geta, so I made sneakers made from whale leather.

The needed area size of the artificial skin had finally been completed when I finished sewing the clothes. I'm in a hurry this time, so making only one should suffice. Before long, I'll make another 4-5 pieces.

This time I'm making a disguise mask by applying process that's similar to special effect make-up with the artificial skin as the base. Another person's face is a difficult thing. Let's make the mask with the face of a famous celebrity on earth as the base. I adopted the face of a young foreign star that won't be associated to me.

The artificial skin alone won't be able to conceal my facial skeleton, so I use a fiber that can expand and one that can harden if I put it with magic power as the mask frame. The material for both fibers are abundant in the storage from the gathered materials there, it should be enough.

During the work, Leriril diligently helped me by preparing the work instruments like an assistant would, or cleaning the fallen materials and scraps.

This disguise mask that I've made has become a magic tool that can change the contour and fat of your face.

Suddenly, it flashes in my mind, "Can't I also manipulate my body figure if I use these materials?"

That might be a good idea.

I can't make it right now since I don't have enough artificial skin though. Let's postpone making the skin-colored leotard for later even though it's been on my mind. Making my body double might be possible if I add it to a living doll.

◇

Now then, let's arrest Sir Sokel all at once with the completed clothes and disguise mask.

I open the map to check the turn of events.
Apparently, the situation has rapidly progressed during my carefree handicraft endeavor.

The lost thieves besides the executive classes in the (explorer guild) dungeon have been moved to the dungeon of the labyrinth army, maybe as a precaution against a raid.

Besso and his friend are in the back alley of the downtown. The two seem to be hurt. When I checked on them with [Clairvoyance] magic, they were being chased by thug-like group of people. They're probably members of [Goblin Claw]. Some male guild staffs are also chasing after Besso and his friend.

And the vital one, the mansion of Sir Sokel has been surrounded by the viceroy's soldier.

Since there are some guild staffs in the mansion, the guildmaster who has looked at that document seems to have urged the viceroy to take out his soldiers. Still, I didn't think that she would raid the mansion of a noble without even a proof. I don't know if it's because the secret maneuver skill is superior, or the guildmaster is quick to act, or the Fiend Drug is too dangerous.

They have gathered all the mansion's servants and the slaves in the entrance hall. Sir Sokel is not among them.

From the marker list in the map search, I tap on Sir Sokel to see his current position. He is in a carriage with his butler outside of the labyrinth city. The alchemist-san in question is also with Sir Sokel.

Judging from the direction they're going, northwest, they're probably escaping to the coal mine town, or maybe they will continue going north to Eluett Dukedom. Since they're outside the map, I use [Clairvoyance] magic to see and check whether there are pursuers. The viceroy soldiers are pursuing them by riding a horse five kilometers behind them, they will probably caught up before they reach the mountain road.

Well then, it seems there's no need to use the disguise set even though I've taken the trouble of creating them.

A [Signal] from Lulu came when I was feeling exhausted.
The content is [Emergency Incident].

10-32. Fiend Drug (2)

Satou's here. When I hear the word 'jealousy', love is the first thing that comes to mind. However, unexpectedly, jealousy against the success of other seems to run quite deep.

◇

"I'm going back to the mansion since some urgent business came up. Leriril, I'm sorry but please clean-up the workshop."
"Yes, I understand Satou-sama!"

Huh~? I wonder why, Leriril seems strange. Far away from calling me brat, she even uses "sama" instead. I waved my hands to Leriril who saw me off with sparkling eyes and returned with teleport. Come to think of it, I feel that she had become quiet after I completed making the artificial skin.

Now then, putting aside the trivial, I have to go for Lulu's emergency.

I'd like to go back immediately with teleport, but let's check the situation ahead.
First, let's confirm the mansion with the map. About 10 soldiers and two high level knights have come to the mansion. They're all the viceroy's subordinates.

This is puzzling. What do they want?

After checking the mansion basement with [Clairvoyant] I return there with Teleport.

I ignore the knocking on the basement door, take out a pen, an ink, and several paper sheets from the storage and put them on the work desk. In addition, I take out a candle and a candlestick, light it, and put it on the work desk. Lastly, I put the seal ring there and the preparation is complete.

Please let them be pointless if possible.

I unlock the bolt, open the door, and shout at the one who's knocking the door.

"You're noisy. I can't concentrate!"
"I, I'm sorry. Chevalier-sama is being suspected of using fiend drug. Please come to the viceroy office."
"Me using fiend drug?"

We come up above the ground while talking.

Apparently, they're doubting us for using the fiend drug since our levels are abnormally high for being so young.

Ludicrous. The risk is too great compared to the effect. If we only want to level up, I can make them level up to level 50 in just 10 days even without using such a drug.

"Master."
"It's fine, this is just right. I have some business with the Marchioness anyway, so let's think of this as the opportunity."

Still, who instigate this I wonder?

The Marquis should be thinking that I'm a source of revenue, while Baronet Dyukeli has a debt regarding the matter about his daughter. The possible pattern is from the Marquis' followers who don't want their position get taken.

When I was asking Ms. Miteruna to watch over the mansion, she gave me some advice.

"Master, I've heard some rumor about inquisitor Baron Vilas that he abuses his Fathom skill to get ahold of merchant's and servant's weakness. Please be careful."

I see, so he would change the subject once he starts asking things unrelated to fiend drug, I should object when that happens. I won't be caught off-

guard if I just ready myself. Let's have the Negotiation and Tact skills work their magic.

While thanking Ms. Miteruna for her advice, I see the basement with Clairvoyant magic. Then by using [Magic Hand], I open the ink bottle on the work desk, and write a memo using the quill pen with instructions for Ms. Miteruna. I prepare another letter asking for rescue, and stamp the sealing wax with my seal. I collect the seal and the candle into the storage.
I didn't give it directly right now in order to prevent the mastermind from anticipating it. The handwritings are a bit messy, but it should be readable enough.

"Right, Miteruna. I forgot to close the ink bottle in the basement. Could you close it before the ink dried out?"
"Certainly master."

I head toward the carriage that has been prepared by the viceroy office, I explained the situation to Arisa and the others in the labyrinth, and ordered them to stay there for the time being.

◇

I bring Lulu along to the viceroy office, the three-story big building made of marbles that's right beside the eastern gate.

"Sir Pendragon, the inquisitor will be coming in a short while, please wait a bit in this room."

The high class-like bureaucrat young man has lead us to a bizarrely splendid room for state guests. I recorded various interiors like the furnitures with [Photo] magic since I rarely came to such a place.

"Lulu, relax your shoulders and sit down here. It's quite comfortable you know."

I let Lulu who was standing behind me come to sit on the sofa beside me I asked the maid who was standing by in the corner of the room for two sets

of tea.

I whisper to Lulu gently that there's nothing to be worried about in low voice while embracing her head. The maid-san shouldn't suspect anything since Lulu's face has turned red. I think maid-san hadn't had enough training since she looked like she'd even vomit out sugar.

The inquisitor guy finally arrived when Lulu had settled down. Moreover, he's even brought six armed knights along, possibly to intimidate us. They're skilled people of level 20-30.

"Nice to meet you, Sir Pendragon. I am Baron Vilas the inquisitor. Ah, you can keep sitting like that. The inquiry will be over soon."

The inquisitor is a bald man with thin eyebrows who has a magic being like Raka with a [Fathom] skill. It should be a skill that can tell if someone is telling the truth or lying if I'm not mistaken. Come to think of it, this is the first time I've meet this baron. I would have meet all the peerage-holding nobles in the labyrinth city if I just met with the vice-viceroy next.

"Then answers my questions with 『Yes』 or 『No』. There is no need to add excessive explanations."

The inquisitor warned with a posed look on his face that would likely have a light sfx on if he wore glasses.

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you used fiend drug yourself?"
"I have not."

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you administered fiend drug to other people?"
"I have not."

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Have you instructed other people to administer fiend drug?"
"I have not."

Long.

He's probably asking the question one by one to prevent deception.

"Inquisitor Vilas asks. Do you know the recipe for making fiend drug?"

A dangerous question finally came up, but I didn't need to answer that.

◇

"Sir Vilas! What do you think you're doing? Sir Pendragon has rescued my son and the state guest princess from the lost thieves. So to speak, he's the benefactor of Selbira city. He wouldn't take those lost thieves who should be his underlings to the surface alive if he had anything to do with fiend drug!"

The one who entered the room with a long protest is the Marchioness. Even the Marquis himself is behind her. A fox in tiger's clothing, version 2*. This time the connection, or rather the bribe power from the prior investment has bear its fruit.
<*TLN: Japanese idiom that means a person in weaker position who hides behind the one with authority.>

"My wife is right. Who instructed you to haul Sir Pendragon away?"

So the one who ordered him to capture me really wasn't the viceroy.

"I-it's because the story about the disparity between the strength of Sir Pendragon and his retainers and their ages was the talk of the salon..."
"In other words, you had bought into the baseless baloney in the salon, and made him, who is one of your fellow noble, underwent the humiliating inquisition?"
"Viceroy-sama, i-it's a misunderstanding--"

Apparently, I have been regarded as an eyesore for participating in the Marchioness' tea party. There really are some narrow-minded people who get upset just from a newcomer participating in the tea party once.

I took advantage of when the Marquis was reproaching Baron Vilas, and inquired him, he confessed while sweating waterfall that his goal was to

seize my weakness by first inquiring about the fiend drug. Looks like it's the vice-viceroy who has instigated him.

The reason why he confessed this unnaturally far might be because of Interrogation and Coercion skills. Maybe I had better normally turn both skills OFF.

The Marquis will be discharging both the Baron and the Vice-viceroy the instigator. Since the Marchioness looks satisfied behind, leaving it to him should be fine. I thought that they would only be given some stern warnings, but since this means that they won't freely interfere with us again from now on, this is good enough.

I report to Arisa that the problem has been solved and they don't need to worry anymore.

The reason why the Marchioness conveniently intruded this time was thanks to Ms. Miteruna who properly acted upon the memo that I had left in the basement.

After I was taken by the carriage, she went to the Marquis' mansion to deliver the letter with my seal as instructed. Normally, a letter from some lower noble would have been postponed, and finished just like that, but it seems that as the result of the pastry that I had given back then, the maid gave the letter to the lady attendant, and the attendant gave it to the Marchioness, so she could quickly read the letter. I'll present them with various confections later.

Since Ms. Miteruna had come with a carriage, I lifted Lulu in and let them went home ahead. I was going to go back with them, but I couldn't reject the Marchioness' invitation to a dinner. It had become a dinner where we said our thank and apology to each side.

The princess profusely pestered me to tell stories about the labyrinth during the dinner, I answered her while taking care not to disturb other attendants. It would be bad if I carelessly told her some exaggerated stories and made her and plump-kun go to the labyrinth again.

None of the the dinner menu, the so-called full course meal, use ingredients

made of monsters at all, it's probably the Marquis' house chefs' fixation. If I have to say, there are not enough vegetables. Every dish was delicious, but the beef stew was superb. I'll recreate this taste for everyone later.

◇

I thank the coachman of the Marquis' house carriage for sending me to the mansion, and enter the mansion. Ms. Miteruna who had come to meet me gave some kind of basket to the coachman. Since I smelled something sweet, it was probably confections that Lulu had made.

I search the map while relaxing on the sofa. Looks like Sir Sokel has been arrested, he's currently being confined in one of the viceroy office's room. Shockingly enough, Besso is still running away. One of Besso's male friend has been apprehended by the explorer guild, he's in the dungeon of the west guild.

I have been surrounded by everyone when I finished the check and closed the map.

"Looks like it was terrible."
"Yeah, it's going to be uglier tonight though."
"Hoe? 'I won't let you sleep tonight', that kind?"
"Yes, yes, you're cute Arisa."

I off-handedly sweep off Arisa who's playing around.

"Since the lost thieves are more trouble than I thought, I'm thinking of seriously eliminating them. And also, it seems that there are carriers and slaves whom the lost thieves have captured and made to work, so I'd also like to rescue and shelter them."
"I'll help~?"
"I'll work hard nodesu!"
"Nn."

I pat the head of Tama who looks up from where she sits on my lap. Pochi and Tama peek from both sides, but I can't let them help me this time.

However, I feel slightly lonely that Arisa didn't retort back even though I said something quite absurd.

"I'm sorry but please stay at home this time. Mia, can you create Artificial Being like Aialiaze-san does?"
"Nn."
"Is there any that's suitable for surveillance?"
"...■■ Wing Ball"

No wait, I didn't say that you have to use it now.
Mia has called something that looks like a ball with wings. Can it do surveillance even without eyes? Mia said that it's alright while beating her flat chest.

"Then, please watch the viceroy's mansion and the west guild with Mia's Wing Balls. Get in contact with me if a disturbance happens."
"Nn."
"Okke."

Now then, let's get some work done for the sake of safe labyrinth life.

10-33. Fiend Drug (3)

Satou's here. It's important to prepare things in advance. It's troublesome to do it while you're in the middle of a work, but if you don't prepare properly, you'll have a tough time later on. It doesn't feel like you need to do it until you learn it from the mistake though.

◇

Equipped with the artificial skin that I've made in the ivy mansion this afternoon, I change into a different person by using Disguise skill in full throttle. In addition, I equip a black mask to cover the area around my eyes.

Then, I change the Companion column into these. The name is Kuro, level 50, the occupation is bounty hunter, the skills are of shooting-related ones, rare magic, elf language, dragon language, and the exact opposite of Satou's modest stats. I recorded the various stats in the memo column so I won't mistake it whenever I disguise myself. I can use Nanashi if I want, but disguising myself will have no meaning if it becomes [Nanashi appears wherever Satou is], so I've decided to make the third persona.

"Satou-sama, what are you going to do with such a disguise?"
"I'm going to eliminate the lost thieves. Leriril, I'm sorry, but is it okay if I shelter the people who have been caught by the lost thieves here?"
"Please use the surface mansion if possible. There are many dangerous equipments in the underground."

Ah, I forgot about that.
I install a carved seal board for teleport on the surface mansion.

"Well then, I'm going. I'm counting on you to receive them."
"Yes, please leave it to me!"

Ah, I can't stop feeling odd at Leriril who replies promptly.

◇

I initially went to the safe area of Area 17 where the villa is.

First, I have to prepare the particular by finding the place where I can apprehend the lost thieves.

I mark all the lost thieves inside the labyrinth. There are approximately 300 people in total. 90% of them have committed felony like [Murder].

Next, I look for the working field that Rudaman talked about. I try searching the main ingredients of the fiend drug, Ruin Weed and Decay Stem in each area. Although there are places where they're growing wild, I pick ones where they're growing densely that have obviously been tended by humans, and have carriers and lost thieves nearby them. There are three places all in all. Moreover, the places cannot be reached without going through troublesome areas.

Next, I search to see if there's any noble or their servants. Miss Gina's party [Moonlight], and other three noble parties come up. Judging from their positions, every party is innocent. They're quite enthusiastic to hunt by staying overnight. Even miss Gina who was at level 6 when I first met her has smoothly leveled up to 9 now. They're probably leveling up efficiently by constantly fighting higher-leveled enemies.

Next, I need to prepare the place where I can temporarily put the lost thieves. I can't exactly bring them to the authority in the middle of the night.

The chosen site is in one corner of Area 37. It's a bit deep but since it's an area with plant-type monsters, it has watering holes. I've picked the place where Gushing Holes can't geographically appear, and with only one entrance to it.

I look for the shortest route there. I can likely get there in 20 minutes if I break the walls in two passages along the way.

While relying on Invisibility and Spy skills I fly on the passage ceilings with

Sky Drive. It seems that no one from the explorers parties along the way noticed me. Even if they do, they will probably regard it as a new kind of monster.

The hall where I've arrived at is quite a damp place with water dripping from the ceiling.

Fern-type plants are growing in colony. It looks like they're monsters. I tried throwing an ant leg from the storage to it, and the fern leaves became like a chainsaw, cutting the leg. I'm unsure whether this monster belongs to a fantasy or a horror work. Let's check the leaf's structure later.

I catch sight of monsters that look exactly like triceratops between the trees. It's probably not a normal dinosaur since violet flashes sometimes appear on its orange-colored transparent horns. While producing chewing sounds, these monsters are munching the leaves that are rotating like chainsaws without even caring about it. There are also two-meter class dragonfly-like monsters fluttering around.

Geez, it's completely a Cretaceous era.

I pull myself together and begin the clean-up. I swiftly cut down the stronger monsters with [Flexible Swords]. Since they'll likely smell if left alone, I put them into the storage with [Magic Hand] in no time flat.

After I've exterminated the big ones, I use [Remote Arrow] to eradicate the small fries. I retrieve the bodies just like I did with the big ones.

In just 10 minutes, I've completed clearing the monsters in the hall.

In the center of the room, I put a lot of bowls with clothes inside and dried meats from insect-type monsters in jars. These dried meats were something that the mansion children had made for practice. They're terrible thing that even made the beastkin girls to put down their forks with just a single bite. It was clearly a failure, but I couldn't throw them away just like that either, so I stowed it away in the storage. Might as well use it for the lost thieves I'll be capturing.

Next, I block the only passage to the room with a big rock that I had stored

in the storage from the aisle. Then I put a carved seal board on the middle of the passage. In addition, I make hard stone walls at a certain length in the passage afterward by using [Stone Wall] magic on the soil taken out of my storage.

The impromptu prison is complete with this.

◇

I catch the lost thieves with a series of capturing combo starting with Remote Stun.

"Who are you bastard! Who do you think this great me is!"
"Yeah yeah, I'll listen to you later."

I defeat the one who seems to be the boss of this lost thief group by pounding him with Remote Stuns. I then floor the rest of the small fries with the capturing combo.

Fumu, it's 55 people with this huh. I guess this is it for this base.

I lift the captured lost thieves with [Magic Hand] and teleport to Area 37. I advance on the passage, and then put the rock that block the way to the hall into my storage, opening the road.

Since the fallen lost thieves were crowding in front of the rock, I pushed the fresh lost thieves inside, putting them back into the room. After I've finished putting them inside, I place the rock again, blocking the passage. Booing broke out from the other side of the rock, but I ignored it since it didn't interest me.

However, it was a bit of failure. I forgot that there were also women among the lost thieves. I can let them stay in the same room, but I don't want that somehow. It can't be helped, I make another room with a door in the passage and decide to confine the female lost thieves there. Just like in the hall, I've also provided food, salt, two barrels of water, an empty jar, and a partitioning screen there.

I teleport back to the base just now and this time, I lift the carriers and the slaves with [Magic Hand], and take them to the mansion of ivy.

"H-here is?"
"Onee-chan, it's stars! I can see the stars."
"Outside? It's really the outside?"

Leriril who have waited for our coming claps her hands to gather their attentions.

"Be quiet children of human. This is the mansion of ivy, the place where sage-sama lives. I'll send you back to the labyrinth if you make an uproar."

The threat seems to be effective as the worked-up people have quieted down.

"Have your representative steps up. Porina, please explain the things to the representative."
"Yes, Kuro-sama."

Porina is the leader of the carriers whom I've saved first. She's level 7 despite being a baggage carrier. Her skills are [Carriage], [Cultivation], and [Harvesting].

I leave here to Leriril and Porina, and go back to the field earlier. I put one of the surveillance magic tool that I've created for the villa in one corner of the room. It looks like a two-meter long pole with a skull on its tip. The skull part has surveillance and information transmission mechanisms installed. The pole part has magic circuit for circulating magic power, and it can operate for three days if it's filled to the brim with magic power. I made this for surveillance around the villa, but since its appearance was unpopular (among the girls), I stowed it away.

I attack the remaining large-scale lost thief hideout and rescue the carriers who are working there. The bigger places are complete with this. Next, I assaulted the smaller lost thief groups that had dispersed in 10 places. Dealing with them was troublesome since they were running away in small groups.

Once I throw the last lost thief into the temporary prison, I take a breath.
It should be fine to take these guys to the west guild after the day has risen.

◇

In total, there are 220 people that I've saved. 110 people are carriers, 80 are slaves, and 30 are unexpectedly explorers. All of them are women. Apparently, men who were caught were either killed, or made to work as slaves until they made them became decoys for a special strategy (Train), killing them.

Most of the women seemed to be working on the field with shackles on their legs. Looks like they were also cultivating crops for the lost thieves' consumption besides the ingredients for the fiend drug. Due to that, there are some who have Cultivation, Harvesting, and Mixing skills.

There are a lot of female explorers at level 5, the ones who were higher than that were either solicited into becoming lost thieves, or killed.

Leriril was still up, but Porina and the others have gone asleep since they seemed to be tired, I'll talk to them again once the dawn arrives.

There are too many of them and not enough rooms in the mansion, so she has prepared beds in the hall and the corridors for them.

"Sa, Kuro-sama, actually, we have ran out of the reserve food. The vegetables grown with 『Green Hand (Grow)』 magic in the garden are at its limit too."
"Ah, sorry, I forgot to supply them."

Leriril leads me to the food warehouse and then I take out a large quantity of ingredients. Most of them are the ones I've collected in the lost thief hideouts, but I've also put things like wheat, potatoes, frog meat, salt and many other things. It should be enough for a while since they're around 6000 meal worth in all. I give her various kind of medicines since there are some unhealthy people among them.

"Is this a space magic?"
"Un, something like that."

It's dead at midnight now, and there's still quite some time until morning, so I go to the underground workshop with Leriril. Communications from Arisa comes at regular interval, reporting "No abnormal~ity" with a sleepy voice. I suggested her to alternate the monitoring work, but since she said okay, I'll let them work hard until Arisa and Mia doze off, and the regular contact gets cut off.

Sir Sokel doesn't have a peerage even though he's a noble. I feel that there's a real mastermind behind this, although I hope it's just an unfounded fear. If the mastermind is in this city, they should be raiding tonight. And right now until the early dawn is the time with the highest probability for the raid.

I thought of going back to the mansion for an instant, but I decided to prepare various things in the underground workshop and went to the streets.

10-34. Fiend Drug (4)

Satou's here. I feel that assassins mainly use poison as their weapons. I wonder since when their attack variations increase, like strangling with wire, or long-range needle attack on the vital spot. Nowadays, what's the weapon that's in fad for assassins. I'm slightly interested.

◇

"You're Sokel right?"
"W, who are you guys?"
"We're just running an errand."

There are two burglars who have invaded the viceroy office where Sir Sokel is confined. Both of them have completely covered their faces and worn thick brown mantles. Their hands are holding swords which leak out dubious light.

"From who?"
"From his highness of course."

The burglars finally noticed my presence with that question and hurriedly pointed their swords at me. While one of them proceeded to restrain me, the other one probably continuing on to erase Sir Sokel. I was unsure since I kicked the burglar before me away to the burglar in the interior, stopping him. Maybe I kicked them too strongly, both of the men have sunk into the wall. They would have come out to the room beyond if they had been pushed further.

"Goha, what a heavy kick."
"The rumored Mithril explorer huh."
"Wrong."

You guys actually have some leeway right?

The men look alright even after receiving an attack that should have normally fainted them. I think the coughed salivas have some red color mixed in, but they have enough mettle to stand up and ready their weapons.

Both are level 30 [Human] races, and their Status are [Magic Body Bestowal]. I think that it's most likely the status of someone who has drank fiend drug.

As a proof, even without chanting spells, purple flashes leaks out from their bodies, and then the area around their bodies are clad in flames.

"I don't know who you are, but I'll have you die together with that man."
"We'll offer you to the death. We are fiends. The ones who will become the protectors of the new world that his highness will build."

Their words have strange accents mixed in. Their grotesque figures were hidden in the mantles which I saw for an instant. Half of their faces have become like tortoise shell, and their eyes are like compound eyes of insects. They look quite grotesque even compared to various demi-humans I've seen so far.

They are still humans despite the grotesque though, so let's proceed without killing them. I have to at least draw that line, or else I feel that I will become a demon lord myself.

Since they are tough enough to stand against a blow from me, I hit them with normal [Short Stun] instead of [Remote Stun]. Let's go easy at first and go with 20 shots. The Rhinoceros Beetle back then could endure 20 shots, so let's go with that many.

One of them was hit with the magic, broke through the wall behind, and vanished into the next room. The other one seemed to have dodged several short stun orbs with his intuition, but the rest of the orbs caught up to him, and sunk him into the outer wall in a strange posture. The outer wall of this city seems to be quite sturdy.

Neither lose their consciousness. The drug seems to be quite excellent as a boost medicine. There are probably some people who have drank it at least once in the battlefield.

What should I do.... Ah, right. I didn't think about it.

Let's test it on one of them.
It's a success. After taking my blow, he's fallen down unconscious.

"Y, you bastard, what did you do?"
"No way would I expose my secret to the enemy right?"

While evading his attack, I destroy his reinforced state with [Break Magic], and then thoroughly snatch his magic power with [Mana Drain]. I also drain the magic power that's circulating on his weapon. I don't know how great is the magic circuit granted by the fiend drug, but it shouldn't work if the magic power that works as its fuel is cut off.

Finally, I hit him, who has his magic power stripped bare, unconscious and it's the end. The enemy still has sturdiness fits for his level, but his unreasonable toughness from just before has disappeared.

I restrain the men with magic-sealing ivy. This is something that I've made from the ivy of Thorn Foot in the workshop earlier, it has the same effect as magic-sealing chain. Unlike the usual, the maker is Kuro this time, not Nanashi.

I reported to Arisa with Telephone that I had taken care of viceroy office.

◇

I can hear the footsteps of the viceroy office guards who have finally noticed the uproar, heading here.

『Goha』
『What? There's an invisible wall here?』
『There's a magician among the burglar. You guys go from another stairs. You go call magician-dono here.』

Sorry for them, but I'm blocking the passage for now.

"Now then, Sir Sokel. Would you answer questions from your life savior?"
"Ah, I'll tell you. I'll tell you, so please shelter me in a safe place."
"Alright. I'll bring you to a safe place if you answer honestly."

I asked Sir Sokel who was desperately clinging to me about the mastermind.

"His highness is a blood relative of Shiga royal family. I think he's a man who has just come of age. I don't know his true identity since he always wore recognition inhibition mask whenever we met."
"How could you make a dangerous drug like fiend drug from the order of such a man."
"It's because his guardian is Marquis Kelten. He also hid his face, but I immediately knew it was him from his peculiar way of talking. I thought that a chevalier like me would be able to become a baronet if I cooperated with someone who had Marquis Kelten, one of the eight marquis along with his tremendous influence on the army, on his back."

I think that's a coup d'etat flag though, will the next kingdom conference be alright?

"In truth you're just disposable huh."
"That's right, how laughable."

I get information about his highness like the way he speaks, his figure, and various things that weren't hidden by the recognition inhibition mask from the listless self-deprecating Sir Sokel. It's really not the third prince huh. According to Toruma Memo, the fourth prince is 18 years old, the fifth prince is 14 years old, since the second child of the king's younger brother is 15 years old, this one is suspicious. There doesn't seem to be any unacknowledged illegitimate child of the king, but the previous king and the king's younger brother seem to have strong lust, so there are a lot of candidates that come up.

Now then, I guess I'll shelter him since he listened and all.
I release the [Mana Wall] that had confined the guards.

"You bastard! Who are you."
"I'll shelter Sir Sokel for a while. Those men over there are assassins sent by

the mastermind called his highness. They're high levels and also users of fiend drug. Don't let your guard down even if they're unconscious. They're as strong as low-rank demon at least. There should be a jail for high level criminals in the labyrinth city right? Put them there."

I intentionally ignore their words, and tell the burglars' motive and other things unilaterally. I change my tone from how Satou usually is, and speak in slightly high-handed manner.

Since I'm currently in a disguise and all, I introduce myself as [Kuro].

After I've finished telling them, I teleport away with Sir Sokel along with the bed he's sitting on. The destination is in the labyrinth. I took him to the deepest working field of the fiend drug. There are multiple intelligence systems here after all.

"H, here is?"
"The inside of the labyrinth."
"What? A, are you going to kill me?!"
"I don't have such intention. Here is a safety zone. There's no gushing hole, and monsters and people won't come here except for some odd plants that are growing here. It's the most suitable place for a shelter."

I take him to the row house where the abducted people had lived in. There is no rain in the labyrinth, but sometimes natural water drip down from the ceiling, so the roof is necessary.

I put the bed from earlier in a relatively large room. Since he asked if it was space magic, I noncommittally affirmed it. I take out daily necessities like food and water from Item Box and put it on a table in one corner of the room. I also leave a cheap knife and hatchet, although I think it's unnecessary. Any one of them are things that was used by the abducted people.

It may look like I'm doing too much, but leaving a noble who can't even cook for himself alone inside the labyrinth is cruel enough. However, I want him to taste a bit of the anxiety and pain of the people who have been captured and made to work hard by the lost thieves.
I've told him that this is a safety zone, and even though it's the truth, Sir

Sokel still gets frightened from rustling sounds of the grass and small animals, he's probably going to sleep while in fear of getting suddenly attacked by monsters.

"Well then, I'll supply you with food in 10 days time. If you don't eat them sparingly, no one will come to save you even if you starve, so be careful."

I leave behind Sir Sokel who looks like he's going to protest, and go back to the mansion of ivy.

◇

When I had returned to the mansion of ivy, fire and smoke from afar came into my view.

『This is Arisa-chan, over?』

I received a Telephone contact from Arisa. Her home-telephone way of speaking has finally disappeared, but this time it's in transceiver style. Please talk a bit more normal.

"It's me. I saw the fire. Is that the west guild?"
『Un, some men with the same clothing as the ones who attacked the viceroy office earlier came flying from the sky. They have wings on their back.』
"I understand, I'll go there immediately. I'm counting on you to keep watching the viceroy office."
『Roger~』

I fly in the labyrinth sky with Sky Drive. From the sky, I see that one section of the guild hall is burning. I tilt my head in puzzlement when I look at the stats of the people attacking the guild. I understand that they've used the fiend drug, but their skill compositions are that of an assassin, not a magician. It seem they can use magic, but since it's wind magic, I don't know the cause of that fire.

The flame stretches out from the ground.

With my skill-strengthened vision, I see the man in dark brown clothing evading the flame while flying in the sky.

Oy, oy, that flame is from the guildmaster's magic huh. What are you doing burning your own base. Why are there so many pyromaniacs among fire magicians.

I want to prevent the fire from spreading further so I strike down the flying burglar to the ground with [Remote Stun] magic. People would have normally died from the fall, but they're really some strong bunch. Big shield Jell and some high level explorers who have come out of the guild hall proceed to arrest the burglar.

You guys act too early.

The burglar forcibly flings away Jell and the others with his super strength from the fiend drug. When he was about to fly away once again, the flame bullets of [Multi Flame] magic that the guildmaster had released hit him. The burglar is roasted together with the ground around him from the countless flame bullets, and rolls on the ground.

As expected of level 50. The power is incredible as long as it hits.

Since she had begun to chant [Inferno], I intervene. Just like the magic earlier, it's not something that should be used in the middle of the city.

By using Flash Drive from the sky, I land on the back of the burglar who has put out the fire and stood up. The force was a bit too much, I could feel several of his bones breaking. Looks like it's a bit too much no matter how sturdy the opponent is. Just like with the guys caught in the viceroy office, I cancel the reinforcing magic, snatch his magic power, and bind him with magic-sealing ivy. It's a simple works that only lasted several seconds.

"Who are you!"
"Rather than that, put this guy into the prison. This happens just when I've come to exterminate the lost thieves, looks like strange fellows are rampant here. As expected of Labyrinth City I guess."

I vaguely swept off the guildmaster who had stopped her chanting and asked my identity, and then threw the binded burglar nearby their feet. Then I fly to the sky, and take out ocean water from the storage to extinguish the burning guild hall. Once I've confirmed that most of the fire have been extinguished, I go back to the mansion of ivy.

Good grief, I can't laugh at the fact that the guildmaster is the one who created the biggest damage here. I wonder how is she not demoted and fired like that.

10-35. Selection Test

Satou's here. In recent games, urgent quests that suddenly appear as time-limited quest with their tedious work has given me a bit of stress. Yet an urgent quest in real life feels like a mere bothersome work that's been pushed into me, I wonder why is that?

◇

It's been three days since I eliminated the fiend drug users. Besso and the explorer who were in possession of the fiend drug have been captured by the guild, but there is no surprise attack since that incident.

The next day, by the guildmaster's request, we went to Rudaman's hideout and the cultivation fields, but those places had already been vacated and only uninhabited field remained. I'm the one who have made it uninhabited so there's no mistake. The guild staff onee-san who was going with us only collected the Ruin Weed and Decay Stem as evidences, and then we went back to the labyrinth city.

"Then, the field you found had been emptied huh?"
"Yes, since foodstuff and daily necessities were also gone, they might have moved to another place."
"We also searched for something like hidden rooms, but there was no one remaining just like chevalier-sama's said. They weren't moved by the lost thieves mastermind since there were unharvested ruin weed and decay stem that remained, maybe they might have ran away by themselves?"

The guild staff onee-san who had gone together with us in the investigation is reporting the result in the guildmaster room.

"We also tried searching the neighboring passages with magic, but we couldn't find anyone."
"That so, thank you for your hard works."
"Should we dispatch explorers again to search for the abducted people?"

"Think of the place, the place. The only ones that can search in such a deep area like that are the Red Iron bunch. Even if they were running away on their own, they would have ended up eaten by monsters before they could reach the surface."

It seems the guildmaster has decided to give up on rescuing, or rather searching for those people.

"They might have been unexpectedly saved by some explorers and returned to the surface."
"That would be nice."
"I also think that the possibility is low, but I wish that they have safely returned to the surface and gone back to their peaceful life."
"I pray that there isn't anyone with compounding and alchemy skills."

While vaguely sweeping off my words, the guildmaster said so.

"Is there something bad about it?"
"Yeah, it's bad. Someone who has the Alchemy skill must be involved in the creation of the fiend drug, even the one who has the Compounding skill should be able to prepare for the making of fiend drug. These guys will most certainly be forced into becoming slaves and made to be in non-disclosure condition to prevent them from divulging the method to make the fiend drug, after that they will probably be confined in the kingdom research facility their whole life."
"Are the other people who are involved in the cultivation alright?"
"Yeah, putting aside the Ruin Weed, Decay Stems can be found in the labyrinth relatively easy so there should be no problem."

Fumu, that means I can release people besides the ones with Compounding or Alchemy skills before long.
Then, the guild staff-san reservedly interjected.

"Umm....May I?"
"What? Say it?"
"People normally don't think of breaking through the labyrinth where monsters are crawling, away from their safety zone, I think such an idea comes up because guildmaster and chevalier-sama are strong. Even if there are some people who come up with the idea, the majority won't move

unless there's a reason like having limited food. In actuality, they have crops from the cultivated field."
"In other words, there must be secret hideouts nearby where they can move safely to huh?"
"Yes, there might be hidden passages that couldn't be detected by the young lady retainer of Chevalier-sama."
"Then I guess I'll torture Rudaman until he spits it out."

Looks like the guildmaster is going to torture Rudaman after this, but since it doesn't seem like she'll kill him, let's not mind it.

◇

I acquire the consent of the women sheltered in the mansion of ivy to stay there by saying that it's because "They will be killed by the mastermind behind the lost thieves if they get out right now". Strangely enough, there were only a handful of people who persistently wanted to go back to the city, most didn't seem eager. I tell them to be patient for 10 days. I'll do something in the meantime.

At the present time, these women are unlikely to be eliminated by the mastermind.

According to the guildmaster's story, I can probably release the people who don't have compounding or alchemy skills. Since the fact that this is the mansion of ivy have been known to them I can't release those people right now. It should work out somehow if I bring them to populated places nearby the royal or the duchy capital, or maybe some villages in Muno barondom and then give them a new name and ID.

I should search some places that can accept them.

◇

"Do you want to become an explorer~!?"

""""Yeah!""

Amplified with Mia's magic, Arisa's voice is echoing through the labyrinth city outer wall. We're currently in a temporary tent right outside the labyrinth city.

100 baggage carriers who aspire to become explorers have gathered before Arisa. We're going to decide the pupils for Iruna and Jenna of Beautiful Wings from among them.

There are 70 boys and 30 girls. They're children who have gathered after hearing publicity talks from Iruna and Jenna during the past three days. Although I said children, the age range spans from 10 to 18 years old. The mean age range is at around 12-14 years old.

Iruna explains the selection test to the children with her voice alone without relying on magic.

"We will choose 15 children among you. First we will choose five children with fast legs. It's important to have fast legs in the labyrinth for scouting and luring monsters. Run once you hear this flute as a signal. The first five children who run around Selbira outer wall for a lap pass."

The children began to run when Arisa blew the flute. Some got their feet entwined by other's foot, some were tumbled by their own feet. The one thing they have in common is that every one of them stands up on their own without crying even while covered in dust, and run. They're truly strong-willed.

I used [Clairvoyance] magic along the way to see if there were any fallen children, but there were only two who had fallen from anemia. I contacted Nana who was patrolling with a horse by using [Telephone], and had them withdrawn.

For some reaosn, Pochi and Tama had somehow started running too. They must have been tempted. Pochi was the winner by a wide margin. Tama was unusually worked up and challenged her again.

When the two had finished running, I looked back at the winning children

who had been passed quite far.

"Damn, to lose to a dogkin and a catkin children. It's a disgrace for a rabbitkin."
"I can't believe I lost to someone beside Usasa."

The first and second place winners looked at Pochi and Tama in frustration. They are 14 years old rabbitkin girl and boy. These children are separated quite far from the third place. The third place is a ratkin, while the fourth and fifth are human boys.

There are 10 children who have failed the first test. These 10 children are doing physical exercise lead by Lulu to build their stamina nearby the temporary HQ.

The second test will begin after a short break with sandwiches. During this break, we distributed water for re-hydration and baked sweets for calorie intake. It'd be troubling if they faint from hunger along the way.

"The next one is endurance run. The first five children who have ran five laps around the Selbira outer wall pass. Lunches are waiting for the children who have ran for more than two laps. Do your best."
""""Yeah!""

For some reason, the answer this time have more power in them than the first time. I intended to let them eat unconditionally for the test this time since we had already prepared meals for 100 people from the beginning, but since it was so effective like they have a carrot dangling in front of their eyes, I couldn't intercede. However, besides the leading pack, many children who were unlikely to be chosen by the selection members stopped running after two laps.

The boys were strong for endurance marathon too, there were three boys and two girls. This time humans were strong, among the five children, three boys and girls who had dark-skin like Roji were particularly strong. They looked calm enough to run several more laps.

The remaining five children will be chosen after the meal break. By the way, the meal menu is croquet made from Leaping Potato and insect meat, and

Walking Bean with insect meat soup.

The meal this time were prepared not only by Ms. Miteruna and the seven apprentice maids from our mansion, but also five baggage carrier girls who could cook. I'm planning to have Ms. Miteruna taught these five girls, and then permanently employ them as personnels for food distribution on the orphanage and the slum. They are plain and honest girls who are at 14-18 years old.

"Well then let's begin the last test. Use the twig we have distributed earlier like you would a sword. Yes, stretch out your elbow. Keep that posture, the one who doesn't lower their arm until the end passes."

Screams broke out from the children, but this is a selection to choose the last five children with will-power. It's out of question if they can't even endure the training before entering the labyrinth.

The majority of them fell in the first one hour, but it was quite long for the remaining seven, once the last one dropped out after three more hours, the five children had been decided.

The final selected members have 11 boys and 4 girls. The plan is to have Iruna and Jenna teach these children the basic for 10 days on the surface, afterward, five of them are going to be taken alternately in three turns into the labyrinth, each group spend five days, 15 days in total, to be leveled up to level 7.

Since the contract with Iruna and Jenna is for three months, the children who have failed in the test this time still have two more chances.

"Everyone, thank you for today! We will open the test again next month, so to the one who have failed this time, please don't give up!"

With Arisa's closing words, the disqualified children go back to the west gate in groups of twos and threes. Everyone is given three baked sweets as the consolation prize. These sweets seems to become the spreading bait for the children who didn't participate this time.

◇

Iruna and Jenna explain the plan hereafter to the children who have passed. There were shouts of joy particularly when they heard that they were going to be provided with three meals and were free to ask for second.

The children are going to be drilled on the vacant land nearby which I've borrowed.

I was going to give the selected children the same ant armors that I had given to Iruna and Jenna, but Arisa strongly objected and warned me. You should not give them cheat equipments if you're going to let them become an independent explorer after the training is over, unless you're making them into your retainers.

Not only Arisa, Iruna and Jenna also stopped me. The reason is a bit different; if they have an armor that protect them from getting hurt from a monster's attack, they will neglect avoiding attacks. Moreover, if they don't get some slight wounds, they won't learn the way to stop bleeding during an actual fight, so I'm told that such armors will not let them learn the importance of them.

When I consulted to Iruna and Jenna about the right equipment for the children, they recommended the equipment called bone equipment. They seem to be goblin bones that are knitted on jacket and trousers made from knitted grasses. It seems the basic equipment advancement for labyrinth explorer is as follow : wood chips equipment to bone equipment to insect husk equipment and then to insect shell equipment.

As for the weapon, the plan is to have them use a club made from goblin thighbone, and then a short spear made from ant claw from the second area on. For the shield, it seems they're planning to use leather shield. Iruna and Jenna bought these equipments cheaply from the apprentices at the shopping district. I've revised some of the weakly-made points, so they shouldn't incur major injury from low level enemies.

By the way, the two currently use mantis-type equipments. They were very happy when I gave it as a present for the celebration of getting to level 15.

Apparently, mantis-type equipments are proof of veteran in the labyrinth city. I probably shouldn't say that they only look different on the outside, as compared to the ant equipment from before, there's hardly any difference in the defensive power.

Now then, if I need permissions from the Marchioness and the guildmaster to hold regular food distribution in the city, let's get them to issue it.

10-35-2. Banquet and the Truth of Beria [Revised Version]

Satou's here. Back then, quitting your job and becoming independent by opening a cafe was popular, but nowadays, it seems that retiring to the countryside and buying a plot of agriculture land to lead a slow life there has become popular.

◇

I was invited to Baronet Dyukeli's mansion under the pretext of an apology for causing me trouble regarding lady Merian.

Looks like I'm not the only one who's been invited to the banquet, the shopkeepers of magic tool shops and medicine shops under his control in the labyrinth city have also come.
When I was in the reception room before the banquet began, lady Merian in a dress apologized for the trouble and thanked me for the rescue. She left the room while whispering me to keep the matter about her going to the swordsmanship dojo a secret from her father.
Her impish smile must have been just my imagination.

◇

"You should get acquainted with them since you're going to be an explorer of the labyrinth city."

He introduced me as his daughter's savior to the shopkeepers.

During the banquet, it naturally has become the talk about goods that are selling well and ones that are in serious shortage in the labyrinth city.
Especially the healing medicines, it seems that even for the shops under

baronet Dyukeli with their inflated prices as the viceroy's ally, the medicines are usually out of stock there.

"Moreover, if we want to create the healing medicine in this city, there is no choice but to stock the ingredients from the merchants in the neighboring cities who sell them at a high price, or pick them from the mountain with wolves after pushing our way through the wasteland."
"It sure is hard to compete against the guild that's selling the healing medicine without minding the profit."
"That's cause those guys are selling at the price of the Royal Capital."
"It really is, they can stock the medicines easier."

I see, although it's obvious that there are difference between the buyer's and the seller's perspectives, there is such a circumstance behind it huh. Although I shouldn't swallow their story entirely just like that, it doesn't seem like they're just being too greedy.

"However, that means during the time when it's out of stock, explorers dive into the labyrinth without even having a way to heal themselves?"
"No, poor explorers will go with leaves of Beria they've plucked."
"That still hasn't changed even now."

It seems Beria is a cactus-like plant that's growing wild on the wasteland around the labyrinth city.
They were also growing along the highway's sides if I'm not mistaken.

Beria is a succulent plant with aloe-like thick needled leaves growing around its cactus body, and as a matter of fact they're edible, while the leaves can be used to cure bleeding or burn.

As for the center fruit, even though it's relatively tasty, it has an alias [Beggar Killer] since it seems that it causes diarrhea which goes on until you're dehydrated if you eat it too much. It can make children and the elderly who don't have much physical strength to die.

Looks like the baggage carriers who have failed to get a job pick those fruits and sell them in front of the city gate to earn enough income to sustain their livelihood. I ignored it since there were many peddlers who were selling things before the gate, but there were such things being sold there huh. I'll

pay more attention to various things next time.

"Maybe it's possible to make a healing medicine from Beria leaf?"
"There's a legend about the sage-sama of olden days who can create a magic potion from Beria leaf, but it's a lost tale from a long time ago."
"Nowadays, 『Healing medicines made from Beria leaf』 is a phrase only said by the frauds in labyrinth city, it's something that no one believes."

By sage, does he mean Trazayuya?
I searched about Beria on his documents, but there were no hit.

When I go to the elf hometown next time, I'll ask Tsutoreiya-shi the alchemist if he knows about the recipe to make the magic potion from Beria leaf.

◇

Later, I was able to see various treasured items on his shops when I was going around them.

Among the items, it seems that the silver sword of ant wing is quite popular. It was more of a gray sword than silver, but it seems to be the easiest magic sword to make from monster materials in the labyrinth city. Since the way to create things from ant wing is written in Trazayuya document, I'll try to make one.

The magic scrolls which I looked forward the most had the same line-ups as the duchy capital since they were all provided by Viscount Shimen.

Interestingly enough, the ignition rod that most explorers use seem to be sold at high price in the neighboring earldom and small kingdoms. It's cheap in the labyrinth city since it's mass produced by amateur craftsmen from scrap magic cores, but in other territories, the rod is made by full-fledged craftsmen from proper magic cores like other magic tools, so it's expensive there.

◇

The Marchioness has requested me to redevelop an experimental farm outside the labyrinth city, although it has nothing to do with Beria fruit.
It seems to be a place near a small water source where the previous viceroy created an experiment to grow wheat, but was abandoned since the yield was bad.

It was right when I was looking for place to employ the slave girls I had saved as Kuro, so I agreed to it.

The explorer-turned-thieves who had built a hideout there were trampled by Pochi and Tama, turned into crime slaves and taken to the coal mine.

Since the land has become barren, I decide to grow Beria fruits for healing medicines, beans for food, and tomatoes. Especially the tomatoes, I expect to mass produce them.

◇

About the healing medicine recipe made from Beria leaf, when I went to meet Tsutoreiya-shi to consult it, he quickly wrote the recipe and handed it to me. It seemed that it was a well-known recipe in the elf hometown, so Trazayuya didn't leave it on his documents since it was too common.

I came back to labyrinth city, immediately made it, and confirmed its effect on the pupils of the training school.
Since the effect isn't especially strong, I guess I'll make it public.

I wrote the recipe on some papers, put them on treasure chests, and then hid them on various places inside the labyrinth. It's a little surprise for beginner explorers.
I've divided the recipe into several pieces of paper with numbering, and put them in treasure chests.

They should understand that the recipe is real since I've put a sample of

Beria healing medicine together with it.
Just in case, I've prepared six sets of the recipe instead of just one.

The first piece of the recipe was found five days later, the labyrinth city was enveloped in a slight festive mood.

In a little while, low level cheap healing medicines should spread.

While thinking that, I watch over the children who are happily harvesting Berias that are growing wildly around the labyrinth city.

10-36. The Man in Black Clothes

<TLN: Title can also mean the man behind the scenes.>

Satou's here. When I'm doing a big job, I make a list of what should be done, and then progress in accordance to the priority. When I make the priority, forgetting to take the dependency into account will lead to failure, so I have to be careful. There is no meaning if I have to plan an A-grade process before I check if the degree of completion is A-grade.

◇

"How is it?　Even among the many slave trading companies in the royal capital, only Orield firm has these array of product lines."

The trader made a signal, and then 10 beautiful women and girls entered the room. It's quite a sight for sore eyes since every one of them is only wearing a thin piece of cloth.
I've come to the royal capital to look for a person with a certain skill needed for my plan.

"Orield-dono, I should have told you that I'm looking for educated people."
"Yes, of course. Every one of these girls can read and write letters, they have also been properly educated on other things."

I confirm the skills of these girls once again. Only the former Serushioku noble girls have the Shiga kingdom language skill, so I can't judge it from their skills. If I'm not mistaken, the country of Serioshioku was the country of princess Menea's fiance, the one that was destroyed by the weaselkins.

I check them one by one, and confirm whether the girl with the skill I want is among them.
The slave trader takes a languid pose while explaining each of the girl's skills and appeal points.

"Leave the second and the third ones from the right, and then the girl on the left end, and also, let's see, the red haired girl over there."
"Yes, understood."

Once the explanation was finished after about 10 minutes, I asked the trader to leave the target girl, and three other girls as dummies behind. The dummies are the former noble girls, and a girl who can use life magic.

When the slave trader gives a signal, the girls strip off their thin cloth.
No, it's nice and all but I'm not asking for that kind of service.

"How much are they each?"
"Yes, this former duke daughter is 300 gold coins. She has the blood of the royal family although of a small kingdom, she's an excellent girl who has not only Etiquette skill, but also Shiga Kingdom Language and Poem Recital skills."

She looks somewhat strong-willed. She's fair-skinned with normal breasts, but her waist looks like the type that can have an easy delivery. Her curly blond hair coil around her voluptuous body. 17 years old. Level 4.

"This former earl daughter is 200 gold coins. Her lineage is a bit inferior compared to the girl just now, but she's obedient, and her body is splendid, she would be useful for various things."

This timid girl has splendid breasts that are nearly D-cups, she's also fair-skinned. She has soft-looking straight long silver hair. Her eyes are of beautiful blue. Her skills are Shiga Kingdom Language and Etiquette. 16 years old. Level 3.

Up until now are just the opening act, the next one is the main act.

"This one is a girl who worked as a heraldry official at the castle of Earl Lesseu. She was rude to Earl Lesseu-sama, and got turned into a slave. Her body is somewhat childish, but her ice-like transparent beautiful face is something to look forward in the future. Her skills are plain with only Heraldry and Naming, but of course she can read and write letters and she excels at filing documents, so she should be helpful for merchant-dono. Her price is slightly cheap at 30 gold coins."

This girl who looks like she's given up on life is the reason why I've gone out of my way to come to this firm. I'm thinking of changing the name of the girls with compounding skills who were capture by the lost thieves, and let them hide themselves in other cities.

She's quite a beauty just like the slave trader's praised. She's beautiful enough to be compared to Arisa and Mia, although of different kind (of beauty). Her breasts are small, but they're at least A-cup. Her hair is pale gold. Her small lips and her lax-focused ice blue eyes only foster her lifelessness. Her name is Tifaliza. 15 years old. Level 5. Her title is [Orield's Slave], but there are hidden titles like [Superficial Courtesy], [Rude One].

I feel like looking for another person with Naming skill when I look at these titles.

"This one is a spell-user girl. She also worked in the castle of Earl Lesseu-sama like the one before, but she also made some mistake, and was turned into a slave."
"Fumu, she must be expensive since she can use life magic right?"
"No, she's only as much as 50 gold coins."
"Fumu, how many times can she use magic in succession?"
"I hear that it's about twice."

This girl's level is only 2 even though she can use life magic. She probably got it from a gift. Although her looks is inferior compared to the girls before her, she's cute enough to warrant the praise. She's a 16 years old girl with dark brown eyes under her red hair. Her name is Nell. She's about as tall as me, her breasts size seems to be around Lulu's. I feel that her waist is a bit thin.

"I'll buy the heraldry user and the spell-user for 30 gold coins. The fallen noble girls have good looks and lineages, but I don't need them if they need other people to take care of them."

The two girls have market price at 48 gold coins so I haggle it to a bit cheaper price, but the slave trader agreed to it just like that. Afterward, the person with [Contract] skill came, and then the trade is completed. I've confirmed that the girls' titles have changed to [Kuro's Slaves].

When I was leaving, I passed by a slave, and felt like I had been duped by the slave trader. That slave had the Naming skill, and priced only at 2 gold coins. Even though I knew that there were three slaves with Naming skill here, I feel a bit of fail.

On the other hand, since other slaves who can use life magic aren't much different in price than Nell, they probably judge the price of magicians from their ability, not look.

"Well then Kuro-sama, please come to our firm again whenever you need slaves."
"Yeah, I'll come here first thing first when that happen."

I replied with some lip service to the slave trader who was rubbing his hands, and then went back to the inn by riding the carriage that had been arranged in front of the firm.

◇

When we enter the inn room, I take out one-piece clothes and sandals, and put them on the bed. I looked back when I noticed some rustling sounds.

Why are you two taking off your clothes?

Well alright. I've already seen these girls' naked bodies in the slave trader firm just now anyway. They're clean enough to not need to be washed with life magic.

"Change into these clothes. We will leave this inn shortly."
"I understand."
"Yes."

I can't exactly stare at girls changing clothes, so I write a letter saying that I have vacated the inn, and put it on the table. I've already paid the inn in advance of course.

I took the two who had finished changing to the mansion of ivy's basement by teleporting through two relay points. I've put the relay points when I was going to the royal capital, they are 300 kilometers apart each. I've also put a teleport point nearby the royal capital of course.

No coup d'etat occurs on the royal capital. I don't know whether I've prevented it, or the notion that coup d'etat will occur in the royal capital is just an unfounded fear. I searched for places with fiend drugs just in case, but they were in the medicine warehouse of the normal army facility, it might be just their equipment.

The reports from the viceroy and the guildmaster should have arrived here, so there's no need for me to butt in on purpose.

◇

"Teleport magic.... Chantless.... Is master the hero of Saga empire?"
"No. I forbid you to disclose the fact that I can use chantless magic. This is an order."

I take off the Collars of Subordination from the neck of the two who consent. They had Collar of Subordination since they were treated as crime slaves.

"Eh? How did you take it off?"
"How, even high ranking magicians need to perform a ritual to take them off without the key..."

I take the two who are surprised to the living room.

"Kuro-sama, welcome back. Are these people the human resources in question?"
"That's right."
"Kuro-sama, welcome back."
"Porina, gather everyone besides the five people with the Compounding skill in the courtyard. Leriril, check if there's any girl left in the building."

I instruct Porina while receiving a tea from her. I ordered the two slaves to stay here while they're drinking the tea, and then I went to the courtyard.

◇

"Explorers, gather. You're going to keep them safe in the labyrinth."

I announce so, and then teleport to the labyrinth together with the 47 armed explorers. Of course I held a long wand, and even used a dummy chant.

"Here is the first area. Monsters rarely appear here, but I ask you to escort them from here to the great stairway of the labyrinth entrance. I'm entrusting the foremost person to be the commander of the escort."
"Aye sir, Kuro-sama. I will tell them that we have ran away from the lost thief."

I haven't let them bath for the past two days in order to have some credibility in that claim. Their equipments are something that have been taken from the lost thieves. They're relatively good compared to the ant armor and bone armor. I had given the silver sword of ant wing magic sword to the commander in exchange for the bothersome job I asked her. This weapon used ant bone as the base, and it had become a transparent silver sword when I made it by following the recipe. It's slightly more fragile compared to a normal iron sword when it's not filled magic power, but it's a sharp magic weapon that can cut nicely. It's written in Trazayuya document, and it seems to be a relatively major magic sword in the labyrinth city. It's roughly about 30 gold coins worth. I made it as Nanashi, so the maker is blank like the casted magic swords.
It's cheaper to make than casted magic swords, but since making it is quite laborious, I probably won't make it again unless it was a request.

Continuing on, I divide 87 carriers in two groups and then teleport with them. Lastly, I teleport with 23 slaves whose masters are still alive. I let one act as a guard in five-person groups, and then they escaped out of the labyrinth.

I had given five big copper coins to each people who were released through the labyrinth, enough for their immediate livelihood. I felt that it wasn't enough, but since Porina said that I gave too much, I didn't give more.

Now then, excluding the five people with the Compounding skill, there are three explorers, and 55 slaves remaining in the mansion of ivy.

The remaining slaves didn't have a master, so they requested me to become their master. I'm thinking of releasing the one who seems possible to go independent with their worker-type skills, while the rest can be released after I find them jobs.

The explorers who remain are the noble girls from foreign kingdoms. I have no choice but to leave them behind since they were crying and saying that they'd better off dead than having to endure the rumor about how they've escaped from lost thief.

Now then, I guess I'll continue on to the next step.

10-37. The Man in Black Clothes (2)

Satou's here. I guess communication in the ancient times relied on smoke signal and carrier pigeons? There were things like fast horses or postmen, but there weren't anything real time like the internet and emails. Although there is magic in the other world, they don't seem to be too wide-spread.

◇

I take the girls with the compounding skill to the living room.

"I'll confirm it once again. Are you prepared to have your name changed and live as a different person?"
"""Yes, please."""

The five girls voiced their consent in unison.

"Tifaliza, give a new name for these five. Starting from her it's Ann, Beth, Chris, Debbie, and Emily."

It's a secret that I take the name from ABCDE in sequence.
Since Tifaliza used up all her magic power after naming three of them, I refilled it with [Magic Power Transfer].

I take the five freshly named girls to the hiding place that I've prepared on the nearest town to the labyrinth city, Furusau. For the ex-slaves, Chris and Emily, I need to do the troublesome procedure of making them into slaves once again and then release them. After we finished the procedures in Furusau town slave trader, Ann, Beth, and Debbie also got their IDs. I made the hesitating guard to grip a silver coin when the IDs were being issued, so it had gone smoothly.

"Now then, make the items written in this list."
"Yes, Kuro-sama."

I give a bundle of recipes to Beth and Chris who can read. I will provide their living expense during their life in this hideout temporarily in exchange for them to make the troublesome intermediately materials. Since Emily the ex-slave has swordsmanship skill, I give her an iron sword for self-protection.

◇

Next, I take the slaves to the hideout on the junction town of Kelton located beyond Furusau town. The hideout is reasonably big residence, but 55 people still can't enter all at once as expected, so I only take 20 people at a time. I had their ears plugged and blindfolded since glossing over the chantless magic would be troublesome.

I go visit the smallest slave trader firm. I make the slaves to wait in the refuge.

"Is there anyone inside!"
"You don't have to yell, I can hear you. My ears are fine."
"I have a request."
"Leave it to me. We have everything to your liking, either the blond big breasted girls, or the silver haired little girls. If you have a peculiar taste, tell us beforehand okay. We'll teach them how."

I stop the battered middle-aged slave trader who's happily promoting while taking out a slide rule.

"There are 55 slaves who have lost their masters. I want you to make me their master with [Contract], and then release 25 of them. As for the payment for all those procedures including the necessary overhead, how about 20 gold coins?"
"I'll take it! Let's do it, like I'd let other people take such a delicious job."
"Very well, then, follow me."

The trader leaves the store to his boy staff, wears an overcoat, and then goes out of the store. I take him to the refuge with a carriage. I had the slave trader blindfolded like in some common plot. There's no particular problem

even if he knows, but it's not really good if some strange rumor spread either.

Since the slave trader has ran out of magic power after using Contract for 15 people, I give him magic power recovery potion to drink, let him take a break, and resume the work. During each break, I bring the slaves who have been contracted back to the mansion of ivy, and then bring along new slaves out.

The slave trader seemed to be doubtful, but, losing to the gold before his eyes, he didn't ask unnecessary questions. Cheapskate is the best.

I brought the slave trader, who's blindfolded again, back and presented him with the promised 20 gold coins and high-class liquor I had bought in Furusau. For some reason, the slave trader's face cramped when he was receiving the liquor. He must be very tired. Go drink some good liquor and dream good things.

◇

Now then, about the freed slaves, since they have production-related skills, I'm thinking of building production tenement houses which also double as workshops in the city's vacant lot for them to live in. I had asked Porina, who had gone out together with the rescued explorers, to buy the vacant lot and build the temporary houses. They should be staying in some cheap inn for explorers until the tenement houses are built.

In addition, 18 of the 23 slaves with master have come back. The masters of the slaves who have been saved from the labyrinth have the right to them, but they need to pay remuneration for the explorers who have saved the slaves in the labyrinth that's equal to buying the slaves anew. The masters of the 18 people who had come back didn't want to pay that remuneration. They're presently registered under Porina as their master.

I'm planning to let the slaves who have come back and the unreleased slaves to either work in the tenement houses as apprentices, or become explorers of the labyrinth. I intend to ask them to decide their choice

themselves.

In the future, it's just a coincidence that I, as Satou, am going to use the vacant land nearby the production tenement houses for the explorer training.

◇

In order to get the Wood Plate needed to enter the labyrinth, I go to the west guild.

"I'd like to register in the guild. The normal registration one."
"Y, yes. I'm very sorry, but would you take off that mask? And also please tell me your name."
"Ah, sorry. The name is Kuro."

I take out the black mask which covered my eyes.
I change my voice to be rough with ventriloquism skill. I imagine it to be like the voice of Togawa Mikaru, a voice actor.

"This is the Wood Plate--"
"The explanation is unnecessary."

I interrupted the female staff who was going to explain in accordance to the manual, took the wood plate with one hand, and then left the guild.

Since the carriage that links the east and west guild has come, I ride it behind boys who look to be beginner explorers. One of the boy seems to find my equipments unusual as he frequently looks back, but the other one rebukes him. Three veteran-like middle aged explorers get into the carriage, making it full, so it departs.

"Yo, brother, that weapon is a gun isn't it?"
"You know well. Yes, it's an old muzzle-loading gun called Musket."
"As I thought huh. I've seen it in my local governor's mansion."

Guns aren't a new weapon in Shiga kingdom, it's more like an old obsolete

tool from several hundreds years ago. The reason seems to be because its accuracy is low, and it's hard to obtain the sulfur. There were also magic tool guns like the magic pistol I have, but since the military magic tools called Flame Wand and Lightning Wand are more popular, it has also become obsolete.

"Are you alright using such an antique like that?"
"It's alright, no problem."

I'm not lying. The middle-aged explorers didn't pry more than that, maybe because there are a lot of explorer's kinds. The boy who has been glancing behind since a while ago is slightly unpleasant. Just say it if you have something to say.

"Can I help you?"
"Hey hey, if you're alone, why don't you enter the labyrinth with us? We've just registered today too."

What, they're looking for a companion huh.

"Sorry. I already have an appointment in front of the labyrinth."
"I see, that's unfortunate."
"That's why I said not to do it."

I don't mind going with you guys if I don't have a business, but I can't do it now since I need to transport the lost thieves.

"Oy oy, isn't it quite lively in front of the labyrinth today?"
"Ah, there are so many young girls gathered, maybe some Red Iron guys have come back from the middle part of the labyrinth? With so many girls like that, they're probably waiting for the [Crimson Young Noble]."
"I'd like some~"

I thought that there were few high level explorers, so they're assaulting the middle part of the labyrinth huh. One of the girl notices me, and then tells her friends.

"Kuro-sama!"
"We've been waiting for you Kuro-sama."

The boys who are riding the carriage with me acting strangely while saying, "Eh? Kuro-sama? Eh?" Come to think of it, the boy who can't calm down is called [Kerou]. It sounds a bit similar.

It goes without saying that the girls who are calling me are the freed explorers. The carriage can't move due to the surrounding people, so I get down halfway through, and take everyone along to the labyrinth.

"Kuro-sama, there are 47 people in all. We've done all the preparations."

The commander-san who's hanging the ant wing silver sword stands beside me. 47 people, it's like Ako vendetta. We move to the teleport point that has been prepared beforehand, and then I leave the girls behind and teleport to where the lost thieves are to transport them.

◇

"Hyahha! You guys, we can win if we all go at him!"
""""HOOOOO!""""

The lost thieves have been decreased by 10 people. There seem to be a dispute for boss. Having bloodbath is too much no matter how you look at it. I created several prisons with no hesitation.

Since I've taken their weapons away, they come attacking me with weapons made from stones and some kind of bones, and also by throwing stones with slingshot-like thing.

Why can't you guys put those idea and effort for something proper.

I eliminate the stones which come flying with surprising accuracy altogether with the lost thieves by using three blazes of [Remote Stun]. They shouldn't be able to get up since every one of them was hit by three orbs. With this, it'd be nice if the second group become quiet without causing trouble when I'm taking them.

I wrap the two former bosses of lost thieves who have killed their own friends together with the 10 corpses that they've killed by using cloth handed by the lost thieves who attacked me just now.

I tie the fainted lost thieves in 10 people group, and teleport them to the first area where the female explorers are waiting. I entrust the female explorers to wake the lost thieves and take them to the authority. It seems they're being somewhat rough with the lost thieves when they're waking them up, but when I consider their circumstance, I decide to look the other way as long as they don't kill them.

While restoring my magic power with magic swords, I continued to shuttle 262 lost thieves, including the corpses. I leave the 38 people who haven't committed felony like murder in the temporary prison. They would be treated like the other lost thieves if they go now.

I'll take them along when I'm handing Sir Sokel to the kingdom later.

10-38. The Man in Black Clothes (3)

Satou's here. False name has the impression of something that phantom thieves or swindlers, those kind of criminals, have. It might be because there won't any opportunity to use a false name if you live honestly. Even though Pen-name and Handle-name are kinds of false name too, the impression you get from them is greatly different isn't it.

◇

"Kuro-sama, we have taken all 262 lost thieves to the explorer guild. The guildmaster is calling for you."
"Is that so, I'll go immediately."

While nodding to commander-san's report, I advance through the passageway of death toward the labyrinth city. Commander-san is a 27 years old woman called Sumina. She's an intense carnivore woman with red lion hair, thick eyebrows, and thick lips. I can't call her beautiful, but she's someone with a mysterious charm.

Together with her, I go to the guildmaster room in the west guild. The guildmaster instructed commander-san to get out of the room as soon as she saw my face.

"As I thought, it's you huh."
"Fuhn, to think that the pyromaniac old woman is the guildmaster. Think more carefully about the place when you use magic."
"Mind your own business."

I talk to the guildmaster as Kuro with haughty attitude.

"You broke that Sokel guy out of prison didn't you. I think I should arrest you here and now as a guildmaster myself, how about it?"
"Enough with the pointless mind game. I'm protecting that guy in a safe place. I want to interrogate him, but I'd deliver him in person if you can

provide a safe place that can prevent him from killers or poisoning by his relatives."

The guildmaster is threatening my undaunted and proud attitude. Frankly speaking, the only reason why I'm sheltering Sir Sokel is because I don't want an acquaintance to die needlessly. I'll gladly let the guildmaster takes him if she wants to bear the responsibility.

"Who's behind you?"
"My master is the sword of heaven."
"Hou, didn't think you would answer. To think that the royal family is behind you."

No, I wanted to say that I was Nanashi's subordinate, but it seemed she misunderstood.

"So, have you suppressed all the fiend drug cultivation fields?"
"Yeah, I didn't burn them since I'd like to lure those guys out, but I had released all the people who worked there."
"You really are the person who saved all those people huh. Doesn't seem like there's anyone with Alchemy or Compounding skill though?"
"There is no one with Alchemy skill. I've put the people with Compounding skill in a proper place."

The guildmaster looks satisfied with my answer. I can imagine that she's misunderstanding it, but I don't intend to correct it.

"And, are you going to stay in the labyrinth city for a while?"
"No I originally came here by the request of an acquaintance to take care of someone from his clan who had become a lost thief. I'm going to be in the royal capital for the time being, although I intend to come here again in near future."
"That so. I'd like to give you a medal in my capacity as the labyrinth resource minister."
"Unnecessary."

I tell so, and get out of the guildmaster's room. I tell the commander-san who looks worried outside that it's fine, and head to the guild treasury to receive the prize money. It's nearly 400 gold coins. It's about as much as

two Rudaman's worth.

I give commander-san and the other explorers one gold coin each. Then I handed over the rest to Porina whom I had tasked to buy the vacant site and asked her to pay the settlement.

◇

"Tifaliza, add me new names."
"Yes, what kind of name would you like to have?"

I ask the girl with the unreadable tranquil gaze to add some famous names from the earth onto me.

"Master, even if I add you several names, all of them besides the last one are going to be useless, is it fine with you?"
"Ah, I don't mind."

I nod, and then she chants the naming spell in calm quite voice.

"■■ Name Order. 『Trismegistus』."

I've forgotten about the details, but Trismegistus should be the name of a famous alchemist.
Tifaliza who has finished the naming tilts her head while looking puzzled.

"Master, I'm sorry. The naming just now might have failed."

She tells it without looking troubled, to check her words, I open the menu. The Companion column stays at Kuro name indeed. To make sure, I select the name on Companion and Status columns to check, and the [Trismegistus] name has been properly added.

"It is the case that a name that has been given by someone powerful cannot be overwritten."

Although Tifaliza doesn't know about it, she explains the condition that

makes naming fails. The name Kuro is given by the Black Dragon Heiron, so it can't be helped.

"I don't mind even if it's fail, add me another name."
"Yes, if that is what master says..."

Her word stinks a little like she's somewhat dissatisfied, but she immediately fixes her manner and mechanically continues the naming. While supplying her with [Magic Power Transfer] along the way, about 10 names had been added to me.

Now then, as for Tifaliza's and Nell's future--

"You two, do you have anything you want to do?"
"If it's allowed, I wish to know the well-beings of my parents in my hometown."

Come to think of it, their hometown was destroyed by the demon wasn't it.

"Very well, I cannot teleport to Lesseu Earldom, but I will check it."

I listen to Tifaliza's parents' names, levels and features. Looks like her parents have been turned into slaves together with her. As for Nell, she doesn't seem to have any attachment to her hometown since her relatives have been bereaved.

"You don't have anything you want to do Nell?"
"Right ssu. Please stop with the half-killing and quickly hold me ssu."
<TLN: She speaks like that. Try listening to Disgaea's Prinnies in the original language if you want to hear how it sounds.>

She's a carnivorous woman like Arisa huh.

"What, are you frustrated?"
"I, it's not like that ssuyo? I'm a genuine maiden ssu."
"I'll free you in two, three years, so take care of it until then."

Looks like she was anxious since she didn't know when her master would want her body.

I won't be forceful anyway. I'd just go to the brothel if I want to hold a woman, although I won't expressively say it.

"Are you going to free us? If I'm not mistaken, the two of us should worth around 30 gold coins. I have never heard anyone who releases slaves worth that much."
"I've heard story about someone releasing slaves that's over 50, 60 years old though ssu. But if I have to say, that's more like throwing them away ssu."

Is it that unusual? I think I've heard the slave trader man in Seryuu city saying the same thing.
Nell and Tifaliza don't seem like they have something particular they want to do. They said that they wanted works if they had to.

"Well, when you want to do something, just say it. Until then, study magic from this book. Tifaliza, if you don't know anything, ask Nell to teach you."
"Yes, master."
"Understood ssu. Tifa-san, I'll make you to become a full-fledged spell-user ssuyo!"

Umu, good answer.

I give Nell elementary books of nature magic, water magic, earth magic, and Tifaliza an elementary book of life magic. It'd be most satisfactory if Tifaliza can learn the magic, but it's not like I'm expecting too much. Sooner or later, I'm going to take the two for power-leveling, so this is a preparation.

Now then, I leave Nell who has began her lecture at once, and teleport to the outskirt of Furusau town.

◇

From there, I fly with Flash Drive toward Lesseu Earldom.

I caught a sight of the kingdom army being kicked around by a monster that looked like a dragon.

It's a huge monster called Gaudy Mole. It has dragon-like wings, a split tail, and it wears a richly colored collar roll on its head. Since its level is 47, it seems to be quite formidable.

Is that the dragon that's blocking the highway?

I'm sorry for snatching their job, but I change into Nanashi-style with violet hair and eliminate it with Claiomh Solais from the sky. The highway blockade should be opened now.

I install several carved seal boards for teleporting along the way. I've also installed a carved seal board on the outskirt of the town in Zettsu Earldom that neighbors Lesseu Earldom. I saw an unexpected person in the town of Zettsu Earldom, but since I couldn't meet the person as Satou, I'll be waiting for the next chance. We will probably meet in the labyrinth city or the royal capital.

I arrived at Lesseu Earldom that day, but unfortunately, there weren't anyone who seemed to be Tifaliza's parents. There was no mistake about it since I had searched on the map. I also searched on the three adjacent earldoms and the two neighboring kingdoms, but the people in questions didn't exist there.

I felt slightly depressed, but since the search was over, I teleported to the labyrinth city.
I told the truth to Tifaliza, and then she went to her room after muttering "Thank you very much." I'll let her cry as much as she wants today.

I leave it to Nell to cheer Tifaliza up and went back to the mansion.

◇

"Wlcome~"

Tama finds and meets me who comes out of the basement door. Pochi also rushed here slightly later.

"Today is the festival of Lasagna and Cheese Gratin nanodesu!"

Hou, that sounds nice.
I let Pochi to dangle on my arm while supporting Tama who's climbing my body with my hand.

"Welcome back."
"Ara, welcome back. I saw it~ Master did flashy things that weren't like usual master."
"I'm back. No one will associate it with me if I do something that flashy right?"

I sit down beside Mia and Arisa who are relaxing in the living room. Before Mia could dive on to my lap, Tama quickly climbed down my neck from where she was on my shoulder, and landed on my lap. Pochi changes place with Tama, she's climbed on to my shoulder.

"Mwu."
"Reserved~?"

I've never accepted to that reservation though.

"So almost everything has been settled today?"
"Mostly yeah. I guess it's just eliminating the mastermind behind Sir Sokel and securing the way to make the slaves who've remained in the mansion of ivy to sustain themselves left?"

I wish the kingdom would do something about the former, but if they can't settle it before the Kingdom Conference, I'll intervene without reserve.

I listen to Liza's report about the children's training observation while eating the piping hot Lasagna Lulu's made in the dining room.

"Since there were many rash children, Iruna and Jenna had a hard time. They're going to live in the tent of training ground with the children from today on."
"I see, I should bring them some Brownie Wine for evening-drink."

Looks like the apprentice maids in the mansion are also being strictly trained by Ms. Miteruna. They reported happily about how they were taught letters with the learning card and magic control with magic powered spinning top by Lulu and the others during the break.

Now then, it's been awhile, let's go to the labyrinth with everyone to level up from tomorrow on.

10-39. Training

Satou's here. A scalpel can't dismantle a tuna no matter how sharp it is. Something with suitable length and size is needed even if it's less sharp.

◇

"Tou nanodesu!"

With her small body, Pochi charges toward a monster that's as huge as a two-story house. Pochi and the others are currently fighting the strongest monster in this area, the level 39 Mace Lizard. The figure of Pochi who's charging to the bump on the monster's head which has countless thorns on it looks like a hero.

Even though Pochi's short magic sword pierces the Mace Lizard's head to the sword's base, it doesn't looks like it has any effect. The Mace Lizard shakes its huge head, throwing Pochi away to the corner of the room.

"Having a large head means that you are wise is just an urban legend, so I inform!"
"Arisa, reinforcement magic. Mia, break open its mouth."
"Nn."
"Okkey."

The Mace Lizard who was going to pursue Pochi with a tail attack was lured by Nana's provocation and then changed its course.

Looks like the magic balls shot from Lulu's magic artillery only scrape the Mace Lizard body without dealing fatal damages. Similarly, Tama's twin magic swords also only gouge its thick skin, giving only little damages.

Mia's new magic, Balloon Shot wrenches open the Mace Lizard's mouth. This magic consumes more magic power than its original, [Balloon], but since it creates the needed water by itself, it's convenient to use. It's a spell

that I've created by Mia's request recently.

"Here comes the reinforcement~"
"Thank you."

Arisa's reinforcement magic gives more power to Liza. Responding to boiling power from her body, Liza shouts out the technique name together with fighting-spirit-filled yell. The shout is unnecessary, but Liza always shouts after she receives reinforcement magic, maybe because her tension is raised.

"Flickering Spiral Spear Attack"

The red light that leaks out of the magic spear wraps Liza's whole body. Her figure runs through 10 meters in an instant with a boom sound as if it's cutting the air. The magic spear and her whole body, which becomes like one with the weapon, ran through the Mace Lizard's body.

It's an absurd technique.

"Amazing~?"
"As expected of Liza-san."
"Affirmative. Her attack is valorous, so I said."

Pochi who has been covered in spiderwebs totteringly comes back, I clean her with life magic.

"Thank you for your hard work too Pochi."
"Master, I'd like a bigger weapon nodesu."

Unusual for her, Pochi was being selfish, or rather, demanding for once. Actually, situations where Pochi's and Tama's weapons cannot penetrate through the outer skin of enemies that are level 35 and beyond have increasingly come up. I've actually began making new weapons for the two since yesterday, but as expected, it can't be finished in one night.

I try taking out various weapons from my storage.

"Do you want to try using a normal long sword?"

"Lots~?"
"Big weapons nanodesu!"

With sparkles on her eyes, Pochi tries to wield and feel the one-handed sword, the bastard sword, the great sword, the great hammer, and the halberd I've taken out. She can pick up every weapon effortlessly, but since her own body weight is light, it doesn't seem like Pochi can deal the inertia well when she swings them no matter what.

"Master~? Put out one more~"

Since Tama asked me to take out another great hammer like she was holding, I took it out. Although the hammer is lighter compared to the mithril alloy great hammer in the dwarf hometown, it's easily heavier than Tama's weight.

"Look look~ Spinning top~?"

Tama who's holding great hammers on both her hands spins them like a spinning top. I tend to forget since Tama's physical power loses to Liza and Pochi, but it's also quite high. Arisa and Lulu mutter [Tama is koma] while having their shoulders twitching. That seem to be the vital part. I guess it can't be helped since they're at the age where they can laugh at the most trivial thing.
<TLN: koma=spinning top.>

"Uuu, unsteady nodesu."

Looks like Pochi wants to use a long weapon like a halberd as if it's a great sword, and then she attaches a heavy weight on her body to keep the balance.

"It's not unsteady anymore, but it's heavy I can't move nodesu."

I guess the weight is too much. Even while saying that it's too heavy, Pochi moves while dragging the weight.

"Uu~n, I guess I really should finish making the type of swords that can create the blade from nature magic."

Their weapons need replacement, but there's also the problem of everyone's skill's variations which have stopped since level 20 and beyond. The rear guards are already fine as they are, but I feel that the vanguards need to add a bit more technique-type skill to their repertoires.

"Why don't we go back to the elf village to learn new techniques while waiting for the completion of the weapons?"
"Training right! It's the training arc right!"

When Arisa hears it, her eyes are shining--you don't need to deliberately use light magic to add those effects. Just how far her acting styles have expanded.

It seems the one that's positive to it isn't only Arisa. Liza and Nana who are worried about their fighting time that has been extending with every fight recently also agrees to it.

"Hitting the waterfall~?"
"Marching through the snowy mountain nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama also look eager, although the direction is a bit off.

"The elf hometown is alright, but I'd love to train at the sennin's place or the mountain where dragonkins live~"

While ignoring Arisa's nonsense, I've decided to go to the elf hometown.

◇

"You cheatttt!"

How rude.

We've got back to Boruenan forest by return teleporting five times in a row. Unlike the advanced magic Teleport, Return teleport is limited to 300 kilometers long, so we can't arrive in one go. Therefore, it's quite hard. The

magic power consumption increases with the number of people, so it needs around one meteor shower worth of magic power.

Lua-san welcomed us with surprised face in the tree house on the surface Boruenan. Apparently, she had come here to check the rooms ventilations. She had already gotten used to me coming here with teleport though, she immediately greeted me back normally after I greeted her.

"Hello, Satou-san, there are a lot of people today huh."
"I'm thinking of letting everyone train, so we'll be staying here for a while."
"Yes, you're welcome anytime."

Behind me, Arisa sharply catches Lua-san's word, and says "Today?", but I ignore it. I must not react. I have to magnificently ignore it like a flowing river.

"Yes, I will call Poa and the others. Oh right, Nea said that she had succeeded extracting the vanilla."
"Yes, I've heard that one from Aze-san with Telephone yesterday."

This time Arisa and Lulu check the yesterday's schedule. Un, your memories are correct. We certainly fought monsters in the labyrinth in succession for the whole day, and I was making magic tools behind them during the time I'm free. I developed that magic tool in order to contact the slaves in the distant land. Since they don't have any way to communicate if an emergency happens.

"STOP! Jasuto a Momento."

Why in English.

"What?"
"Question #1, why was it 『Today』?"
"Ara, Satou-san came here almost every other day you know."

Lua-san revealed it without even giving me the chance to explain somehow. Even though I had only come back 7-8 times since we went to the labyrinth city.

"Since when..."
"Mwu."

Lulu and Mia look at me with upturned eyes like criticizing me.

"Whenever I found some delicious ingredients, or unusual dishes, I came back here to share them."

This is the truth. Like with Gebo, or Yellow Lizard meat, or Basilisk smoked meat, I came back to bring them. I also came to Nea-san's place when she wanted to consult about the way to extract vanilla. By no means those were just because I wanted to meet Aze-san.

"Hohou? And by Telephone?"
"Huh? Haven't I said it? My telephone and Aze-san's Infinite Telephone (World Phone) can have a conversation between the labyrinth city and Boruenan Forest."

Never heard of it, Arisa and others pressed on me.
I mean, there would be [Guilty] barrage if I said it right?

Looks like Lua-san perceives the awkward atmosphere, she changes the story.

"Oh right, there are the bean from the spriggans in the refrigerated warehouse, please check it okay. "
"They've already delivered it huh, I'll check it, thank you very much."
"By beans, don't tell me!?"

Fu, fu, fu. I had asked the spriggans who were good at exploring to search every corners of Boruenan forest.

"Let's enjoy it later. I'm going to serve it for the dinner today, so don't overeat okay."
"That has come at last! Ah, would the dinner come faster. Hey, do you have something like an incense that can cheat time?"
"None."

I understand that you can't wait for it, but I don't think that's an item that

warrants the need to hasten time.

◇

I was going back to the mansion of ivy to develop the new equipments for Pochi and the others while leaving everyone in Boruenan forest, but Mia told me to wait.

"Level gap, close."
"Um~m?　You want to go to the labyrinth since you want to close the level gap between you, and Arisa and the others, is it?"
"Nn."

Presently, everyone besides Mia is level 35, Mia is level 27. According to Arisa, it seems that elves need twice as much experience points compared to humans and beastkins.

"Understood, then let's raise it quickly."
"Nn."

I go to the labyrinth city with Mia. I felt like I heard Arisa said, "Quickly he said", just before teleporting, I decided that I had just misheard it.

10-40. Training (2)

Satou's here. There is no level cap in this world, but there are a lot of people who misinterpret that there's a growth limit since the experience point needed for the next level jumps up exponentially.

◇

We're not going to the usual Area 74, but Area 69 where the cockatrices are, its neighboring Area 109, the insect paradise, and Area 104 which is the den of aquatic monsters.

First we go to Area 69. Come to think of it, I wonder what happens to the [Fangs of Conflagration] members that were gone to hunt some cockatrices?

I've finished carrying Mia with princess carry almost without engaging any battle from Area 74 to Area 69. I thought of letting her down, but it seemed she was quite frightened with my moving speed, her hands wouldn't let go of me.

"F, fast you know? It's too fast see. Excessive speed is the cause of accidents, it's dangerous you know?"

Mia raises her index finger while being talkative like when she's drunk and approaches me. She must have been quite frightened. She forgave me while saying "Forgiven" like she usually was when I sincerely apologized.

"Stone statue."
"Ah, judging from its appearance, it's probably an explorer."

A pony-sized chicken-like being is pecking the stone statue. According to the AR it's a Cockatrice Puppy. Probably the child of cockatrices. Its level is only around 20.

It seems the cockatrices feed on their petrified prey, as a lot of them are gathering on trees and monsters that have been turned into stones. In this hall, there are level 10-20 cockatrice puppies, level 25-35 adult cockatrices, and a pair of giant upper level 50 cockatrices.

Before I begin leveling Mia up, I rout the cockatrice puppy with Stun magic, and collect the stone statue.

"Mia, do you have a spell that affects a wide area?"
"Nn, Storm."

I hand Mia a world tree wand, and then she begins to chant. This wand has the best performance to expand the area of effect. Mia's spirit magic fills the hall, damaging the cockatrices. Just one magic has decreased Mia's MP by 30%.

The majority of the cockatrice puppies are exterminated by Mia's magic, while the rest are dying. I use Flexible Swords to cut cockatrices' necks and put them into my storage. Since cockatrices are soft, even the fragile Flexible Swords can cut them easily. I saw flea-like creatures flying when the cockatrices were being stowed.

A giant Cockatrice King and a Cockatrice Queen are coming with reverberating footsteps.

"Satou."
"Ah, I'll eliminate them immediately."

I cut the necks of the cockatrices couple who were burning with anger due to the massacre of their family, and put them into the storage. Since kitten-sized fleas are scattered around when I've put the pair into my storage, I exterminate them with Flame Storm. When the flame reached the ceiling, an explosion occurred.

What?
I immediately protect Mia in my mantle, and evacuate to the entrance.

"Mwu, hot."

"Ah, sorry. I had limited the power, but it seemed that there were flammable gas collected in the ceiling."

I wonder if it's some kind of trap too?
There was a tar pond-like place in the corner of the room. The surface of that pond is bubbling, the gas probably escapes to the ceiling from there.

There were some huge eggs of cockatrices in the room, but they had been broken from the explosion earlier.

◇

A treasure chest appears on the place where the giant cockatrices were defeated.

I've heard that treasure chests may rarely appear on the place where monsters are defeated in the labyrinth, but this is the first time I see the real thing. The one in the demon labyrinth was a mimic after all.

Since the treasure chest was set with petrification trap, I had Mia to evacuate and then removed the trap. I noticed that I should have opened it with [Magic Hand] from afar after I had canceled it, the realization came too late.

Inside of the chest, there are money and jewels, and also various magic items. There's only one weapon, a short sword, but it's made of silver and can be used to invoke magic, quite good. There are 8-9 gold coins worth of metal. As for the magic items, they're an Insect Repellent Bell and three Ignition Rods. Since they look worn-out, they must be mementos of explorers who have lost their life in the labyrinth.
Among the jewels, there are magic catalysts mixed in, some small fire stones, and lightning stones. Although this is the first time I've seen it, their names often comes up in magic tool recipes. They're materials used to make magic tools for military uses called Fire Wand and Lightning Wand.

I hand the short sword to Mia, and put the rest into the storage.

Afterwards, we thoroughly eliminate four of the five rooms with cockatrices, and Mia's level rose by 4. Arisa would probably be mad if I said that it took 30 minutes.

There are numerous individuals that were relatively stronger among the cockatrices, on top of that we got chain bonus for eliminating the cockatrices all at once. I've heard about this game-like exp-increasing bonus from Koshin-shi when I was drinking with the explorers. It's said that if you beat a lot of monsters in short amount of time, the power that becomes level up from the monsters--probably experience points--that you've defeated will be absorbed by you concentratedly, the efficiency is better.

Now then, putting that aside, since Mia's body looked sluggish from the sudden level up, I installed a carved seal board so we could go back here, and then we went back to the villa. I let her sleep on the bed after she ate some sweet things and drank water, then I decided to continue developing equipments for Pochi and the others.

I'm not planning to make something too original. I want to make a short sword with a mechanism that can make its blade extends with magic blade. I can probably make it by modifying the current [Shell] circuit a bit.

Come to think of it, making a whip sword like the Carrion Sword or Galean Sword which Arisa's mentioned back then might be good too. I'd be worried about the strength if it was a real sword, but since the blade is made from magic power, it looks feasible, let's try to make it.

I continue to develop the designs for not only Pochi's sword but also Tama's and the others' new equipments until Mia wakes up. I've hit some difficulty while developing new magic for Lulu, but it looks like I can raise the cannonball firing rate if I use magic barrel.

◇

After thoroughly exterminating monsters in Area 109 and Area 104 until the time for dinner, Mia has leveled up to 37. The plan was to level her to 40, but exp from aquatic monsters were bad, her level couldn't quite get up.

During the third break, I searched the corridor that extended from the deep of Area 104 to the middle layer. It looks like you can descend to the middle layer from Area 66 and Area 104 besides from the entrance in Area 1. The middle layer that can be accessed from these three entrances doesn't seem to be connected, so I would have to get down there from Area 66. The middle layer that can be accessed from Area 1 has three groups of explorers with levels around 30-47 inside. Two of the groups have around 10 people each, while the last group has around 70 people.
The monsters in the middle layer have 10 more levels on average compared to the upper layer, but their numbers are less than half of the upper layer's monsters. The monsters in the middle layer accessed from Area 1 are quite few in particular. Unlike the upper layer, a lot of monsters of middle layer can use magic. Among them, monsters that can use Instant Death-type magic exist nearly in every Area. It will be dangerous if I don't cull the monsters with Instant Death attacks when we go to the middle layer for leveling everyone.

Once our objective has been met to some extent, we go back to the villa. Of course I've already put a carved seal board in a small room in the middle layer for the time we need it.

"Satou."
"Oh, you've woken up huh. It's about time to prepare for dinner, so let's go back to Boruenan Forest."

Since everyone is waiting.

"Mwu."
"Arisa and the others are going to continue training for at least 3-4 days, so we can just continue tomorrow."

I take Mia who's puffing her cheeks along, and consecutively teleport to Boruenan Forest.

"I'm back."
"W, welcome back!"
"I'm back, and also welcome Aze-san."
"Nn, Aze."

There are Arisa and Aze-san in the tree house's living room. Looking at the opened magic book before Arisa's face, Aze-san probably answered whenever she had questions.

"Looks like you're working hard."
"Uh~huhhhhhhh?! Hey wait Mia, what did you do."

Raising her levels of course.

"Ara? You've really worked hard Mia."
"Nn."

Aze-san who doesn't know Mia's level half a day ago is reacting normally, but Arisa who knows that she has leveled up by 10 in half a day screams with surprised look. She's slightly noisy.

"We eradicated the cockatrices, and the scorpion area deeper on, and then also the aquatic monster area nearby it. I can only use the scorpions to make body nourishment potion, but the cocka and the fish look quite delicious you know."
"Kuh, to be that cheat when you seriously do power-leveling!"

Level does increase with this method, but you won't master the way to fight. Mia is participating in the actual battles with Arisa and the others anyway, so this much level adjustment should be alright.

◇

"Eh? Coffee?"

When I present her the coffee cup, Arisa receives it while looking surprised. I take another cup from the storage, and hand it to Aze-san. I feel slightly mischievous, I didn't take out the sugar jar and the milk pitcher.

"That's right. Here you go for Aze-san too."
"Hee, it smells nice. The color is darker than a tea, is it good?"

"Yes, I've always drank it during the job."

Since the cup is hot, Aze-san slides her sleeves on her palm to lift the cup. It's the technique to cope with a cup without handle. Aze-san draws her face close to the steam that rises from the cup, and enjoys the fragrance. Ah, I want to become the cup. To prevent burn, she blows the cup, but she overdoes it, and then she's swooning.

This person is cute like always.

"Uu, it's too bitter I can't drink it."
"What a child. This bitterness is the real pleasure of coffee."

After enjoying the teary Aze-san plentiful enough, I take out an easy-to-drink diluted coffee that has been put with a lot of sugar and milk. I didn't take out the tea-cake since it was before dinner, but since the new coffee suited her taste, she happily drank it while saying, "I can drink this one."

"T, this is the girl power of 530.000 huh.... Aze, what a fearful child."

Arisa is Arisa, I don't know what she's saying.

I took out chocolate parfaits after the meal, but one of it was unpopular for some reason. I have properly put corn flakes in the bottom, vanilla ice on top of it, and then a lot of fresh cream and chocolate sauce on it, furthermore I've even put chocolate bars and banana cuts.

"Kuh, I can't eat it even though it's my dream choco parfait. So this is the Komei's trap!"

I've made the character of Komei on it. Unfortunately, Arisa didn't seem to notice it, she didn't have any reaction.

"Delishlish~?
"Bitterdelish."
"It's a bit bitter, sweet, and cold below, but it's the strongest even though it's cold nanodesu!"

Calm down Pochi.

Nana and Liza also gave their impressions, but it was just "Sweet." After giving their short impressions, Tama and Mia eat it with great delight. Lulu has already eaten it during the trial-run, so she doesn't have any impression now.

Only Arisa who has eaten too much during the dinner groans in front of the choco parfait. Even though I had warned her that there would be a dessert before the dinner began so don't eat too much, she fully went round the meat dish, the fish dish, and the vegetable dish. Still, I feel sorry for Arisa who has given up with teary eyes after one bite, I'll make another for her tomorrow morning so I guess I'll leave the leftover parfait to the pixies who are peeking here like an eagle.

I bite the tea-cake while drinking coffee. The slightly bitter taste of the chocolate powder is spreading in my mouth. It's like the failed handmade chocolate that can only be seen during valentine. I have to improve it more after all.

While wrapped in the sweet fragrance of vanilla, and the lovely fragrance of the chocolate, the night of Boruenan grew late.

10-41. Magic Metals

Satou's here. Even a difficult job can become unexpectedly easy if you split it into smaller parts. Even the difficulty of a large-scale program can rapidly decrease when it's cleverly split. Although, the hard part is cleverly splitting that into smaller bits isn't it.

◇

"Whip~"
"Whipywhip nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama are playing with the newly made whip swords in whip mode. The magic blades are divided by around five centimeters each, and it can go up to five meters long. Since they're trial products for the practice this time, I've modified the magic circuits to prevent injuries from using them.

Pochi who's unable to manage the whip sword finally finds her body wrapped in it. I won't go as far as saying that it's as expected, but it's really like Pochi.

"H, help! Nanodesu."
"Hoitt."

She was struggling for a while, but then she gave up and asked for help. I touch the whip sword and pull out the magic power. Pochi is immediately set free of the binding.

"Thank you nanodesu!"

Pochi stretches her body while saying "U~n."

"Pochi~, like this!"

Tama manipulates two whip swords, entangle them on a tree's branch, and climbs up the tree, and then from the top of the tree, she entwines a wooden bucket on the ground and pulls it up. Geez, she's like a certain explorer from somewhere.

I'll leave those swords for Tama and then give Pochi her true new equipment.

"Pochi might be more suited with this one."
"Amazing nodesu! It's big nodesu!"

From the short sword that Pochi holds, a nearly-three meters long blade appears. It's the same kind of magic as Magick Blade. It can cut well yet fragile. In addition, since it's weightless, it can't cut like a great sword. Someday I'll construct an inertia control circuit on it to make it able to cut like a great sword.

I've not only made whip swords for the play. I also made various romance weapons like a lance with drill mechanism, rocket-punch like gauntlets, or a pile-bunker which is a shield with a pile-driver machine. Arisa was being continuously frolic about it, but everyone was puzzled when it was the time to use them in actual practice. Well, I guess that's how it is. Simple is the best.
I present the drill blueprint with strengthened torque to Doa and Kiya couple. It probably won't be too far off before their Golem Tank is equipped with a drill.
As for the other ones like the pile-bunker, since Shagnig the leprechaun asked only the pile-driver part, I turned it into a normal pile-driver and presented it to him.

I'll make a Death Scythe and a katana with reversed blade next time.

◇

"Nevertheless, Satou-san really likes mithril don't you."
"Rather than like, it's because mithril is the only metal I have that's suited for magic swords."

Lua-san who was watching the new equipments of Pochi and the others asked while wondering. I can't use iron and lead since they diffuse magic power, while even though brass, copper, and silver can transmit magic power well, the good ones are too soft to be used for weapons. Bronze is hard, but it can't transmit magic power as well as copper and silver. In the end, mithril is the only usable one from the process of elimination. Gold transmits magic power as good as mithril, but it's even softer than copper and silver, and the cost is too high.

"Ara? If it's the convenient Divine Metal (Orihalcon), you can make both weapons or armors from it you know?"
"Right. For sturdiness and heat-resistance, there's Hihiirogane, and for weapons, I recommend True Iron (Adamantite) since it's harder than Diamond although it's quite heavy. There's also the Magic Silver (True Silver) if you need to make magic tools."

I wonder what's with this "If there's no bread, let them eat cake" atmosphere.
The things that Aze-san and Lua-san casually brought up are the so-called legendary metals. I've only ever seen Hihiirogane as the blast furnace that's used for refining mithril in the dwarf hometown.

"I will be receiving some Orihalcon from the Saga Empire's hero, but I have no way of obtaining the other metals."
"You can just make it with alchemy."

W, what?!
I grasped both hands of Aze-san who casually said it and asked futher.

"You can make them with alchemy?"
"Yes, i-it's simple you know? Orihalcon is made from copper, brass and also the philosopher's stone--"

Waitaminute. Philosopher's stone, that's.

"Aze-san, I can't exactly use the philosopher's stones unreservedly."
"Didn't we give you severals the other day."

I've already used them. I've used them for living armors and spare circuits of airships. I guess I'll take it from the airships if I need it since taking it from living armor will reset the experience.

"Then I'll give you another one."
"Is it alright? To give those so readily."
"I-it's fine."

No wait, even if you cutely sulk like that.

"If Aze-sama says so, I think it's really fine. Moreover, thanks to Satou-san's deed, we have acquired 1000 philosopher's stones from other clans."
"Ah, I forgot. When I said that Satou wished for philosopher's stones during the high elf assembly, they shared some."
"They gave it since I said I wanted it?"
"Normally they wouldn't. Although it doesn't seem like you notice it yourself, you've done that much you know."

I bulldozed through it with magic in the end though, I feel quite embarrassed when they praise my own work like this.
Or rather, why do other clans have so much of those?

"A long time ago, Ifurueze people got addicted to the plaything of Furu Empire."

That plaything seemed to be an expensive magic tool, and they paid it with philosopher's stones as the compensation. Not the courtesan beautiful women, but courtesan games huh.
It seemed they paid with several philosopher's stones at a time, but most of their philosopher's stones which had been stocked for several decades were embezzled. It seems there are various high elves huh. I'll ask them to show me that plaything later. I'm very interested in it as a game developer myself.

"Although those philosopher's stones were recovered in a thousand years time, we lost a lot during the war with the demon lord which cost us a light ship. Afterward, we used the extra philosopher's stones to repair the broken light ships, so we didn't have any saving."

I see.

However, Furu Empire huh. I feel like I've heard the name somewhere, turn out it's the country which was using the money I got in large quantity from the dragon valley. Come to think of it, there were some unusual money too. I take one out and show it to the two as a material for our talk.

"Sa, Satou-san, that coin is?"
"Yes, it's a thing called Crimson Treasure of Furu Empire that I had acquired before."
"Ara, how unusual."

I hand the Crimson Treasure to Lua-san while saying "It's a beautiful money isn't it?" The long-lived Aze-san appeared to know about it.
Lua-san holds the Crimson Treasure over the light and checks it from various angles. Lua-san let out a bombshell before I could say "Please take it with you if you like."

"This is a philosopher's stone isn't it?"
"That's right."

Eh?!
Aze-san plainly answered Lua-san's question.

"It's not the philosopher's stone itself, as it seems to have been processed a bit, but if you're using it as catalyst, maybe it's easier to use it just like that I think? If you want to turn it back into a philosopher's stone, it should be possible by asking elders and wait a decade."

A decade huh, that's really like a time span of long-lived elves.

"By any chance, magic tools can be made by using this money?"
"Yes, originally philosopher's stone should be processed first in order to reinforce its magic power when it's used as catalyst for making magic metals. I'll teach you later if you want to know about it. I don't remember it now, but it should be in the memory deposit of the world tree."

I decided to accept her kind offer. I accompany Aze-san to the world tree, and learn the way to use the Crimson Treasure and to make magic metals. The Aze-san inside the memory deposit is divinely beautiful like a demi-god that Leriril said back then, and she's showing intelligence beyond human

understanding. But well, if this was how Aze-san was during our first meeting, I probably would not fall for her even though I surely would think she was beautiful. Aze-san is someone who does "Awawa" after all.
As a compensation, or not, I gave around 1000 Crimson Treasures for the elf hometown since it looked like it would be useful for them. I feel slightly proud since I was able to see the surprised looks on the elders who hardly showed their expressions.

◇

First I made an anvil and a hammer made of adamantite. Next, I used those to forge orihalcon sword. The catalyst was used during this forging process, but since I had been inside Aze-san's memory, I was able to successfully make the sword from the get go.
Even though I wasn't too fired up, I ended up making a sword that was several level above the fairy sword in sharpness and endurance. The difference is this great just because I used different material and tools huh. I'll make another set of this anvil and hammer and then give it to Elder Dohar next time. He will surely be pleased. Of course together with all sorts of magic metals too.

I bring the experimental swords and intrude upon Arisa and Mia's training.

"Uwah, that's some gaudy sword."
"Gold."
"That's a pretty sword."
"I made these, what do you think?"

I show the sword and also some accessories made from orihalcon to the three. There are around 10 kinds of accessories including necklaces with thin chain, earrings, hair ornaments, and rings. I've also made earrings that cover the ears which seem to be popular among the elves.

"Earrings."
"Ah, Mia is unfair. I want that too."
"No."
"Uu, you're mean."

Unlike the two who's fighting over it like little children, Arisa puts a ring on her finger ecstatically. Seems that it's too big for her ring finger, it looks a bit inappropriate put on her index finger. I made that with Aze-san's finger as the assumption, but looks like it's a bit too big. I guess that size barely fits Lulu's ring finger.
After promising Aze-san to make her earrings later, I go back to my original objective.

I put the orihalcon sword I've just made in the sword-shaped mold on the pedestal. I pour Blue Liquid on the same-shaped pedestal beside it.

Since the preparation is complete, I ask Mia to cast an original water magic [Circuit Formation: Type 021]. This magic guides the poured blue liquid on the pedestal to form the type 21 magic circuit. In exchange for the fact that it can't be changed, the specialized magic can manipulate the blue liquid in micron precision, and form a very precise magic circuit.

"Arisa, please."
"Okkey."

Arisa also invokes an original space magic of the same type [Circuit Transfer: Type 021] chantlessly. Just like the name implies, this magic transfers the magic circuit that has been completed by Mia earlier to the orihalcon sword. Just like Mia's spell, it only has the function to transfer a magic circuit with fixed shape into the placed sword. They're magic which I have exclusively developed for the making of this magic sword.

Your brain needs to manipulate the image in micron meter if the magic is of general purpose, so it's not really feasible. In fact, Trazayuya couldn't come up with the solution for this problem when he was developing magic swords, he failed.
So, I thought of it in programmer-like approach. If it's difficult to make it general purpose, then it shouldn't be one. When I thought so, the two magics earlier were the result. In exchange for the limited function and condition to use it, it isn't influenced by the magician's ability. It might be what you call the shift from the world of craftsmen, to industrial.

I fill the completed sword with magic power.

The magic power smoothly spreads on the complex magic circuit. The magic circuit is activated, and then the registered magic is invoked.
Umu, it's a success.

"Uwah, it's a blue rose."
"Pretty."
"Yes, it's really pretty."

Looks like it's popular. When you fill this sword with magic power, thorns and small rose petals appear around the sword. The rose and the thorn can't be touched since they're just illusions, but they have an effect of making the opponent that are cut with them to be paralyzed or fainted. Moreover, if you recite the password, around a 10 meters long thorn will extend and bind the opponent. This technique art seems to be an ancient magic of the elves called [Sleeping Thorn]. The opponent that's binded with it will feel the thorns, and fall asleep after having been paralyzed. Yet, the rose and the petals are merely decorations, so they don't have any particular effect.

I presented this sword to Pochi's teacher, Miss Portomea. Aze-san couldn't use swords, and besides me, everyone else used short swords, a great sword, and a spear, no one used one-handed swords, so by first come first served, it became her.
Since she flaunted it too much, I ended up making a lot of magic swords with the same construction during our stay in Boruenan forest. It would be hard to make them all by forging, so I asked them the leniency for the swords to be made of bronze and of casted magic swords. This casted magic sword is a short sword size and makes red roses appear when you fill it with magic power.
For my companion use, I made the swords in short sword size and forged them from Orihalcon. There were also Arisa's dagger and Lulu's kitchen knife mixed among them for some reason.

The sashimis made with the orihalcon kitchen knife were delicious.

10-42. Mithril Plate

Satou's here. Often times I can't get my hand on something no matter how hard I endeavor. I can't reach it even though I see other people getting it so easily. Is it precisely because of that frustrating feeling that it's shining when the effort bears fruit?
This is about rare drops in net games though.

◇

Two weeks have elapsed since we got back from Boruenan forest, leveling up everyone and the labyrinth city project are going well.

"It's wider than I thought."
"Ah, it's because I got it from the lands that had been secured by purveyors."

Today I'm with Arisa inspecting the planned site where the private orphanage and the explorer training school will be build. It's about as big as an average primary school, quite big inside the city. Thanks to the Marchioness's middleman, I got them as goods, but I had to give her all kinds of accessories of the same value as the reward.
Since it was almost the time for the kingdom conference, I made some shiny gaudy accessories for the Marquis and his wife, but despite using normal precious metal and jewels, the accessories had became something that my Estimation (Market Price) skill couldn't judge. I can't help but feel that selling accessories to the nobles will be more profitable than secluding ourselves in the labyrinth. I told the Marchioness that I got them from some foreign merchants when I was visiting the trade city. I've put some some suitable name on the maker column. I honestly don't remember if it was Michaelangelo or Da Vinci.

"Next we just need a manager for the teachers huh."
"Right, I'd like a leader for the organization and an accountant, but they're hard to find."

Actually, I had interviewed Miteruna's family members, and some nobles whom the Marchioness introduced, but there weren't anyone well suited to become the leader or the accountant, although it would be different if I was hiring them as teachers. There were a lot of people who looked capable as a leader, but every one of them was either the type who despised orphans and commoners, or someone who only saw the orphanage and the school as a stepping stone to rise their position higher, so I didn't employ them.
That said, since it would embarrasses the ones who introduced them if I didn't employ anyone, I selected three reasonably less objectionable people, and dispatched them to the royal capital academy under the pretext of training. It looked like I was just getting rid of nuisances, but since I gave each
one of them 10 gold coins for two months stay and food expense, they didn't have any complaint.

"Looks like there are a lot of people who employ a slave to work as the accountant to prevent embezzlement you know?"
"It can't be helped, I'll look for one in the neighboring cities."

Since Tifaliza doesn't have Arithmetic skill, entrusting her to be an accountant is probably impossible. It seems Arisa and I have to split the work for a while.

The orphanage building is still under construction, but we have already started the admission. I had planned to start the admission after the building was completed, but since Pochi picked up some dying children in the back alley, I decided to start the management little by little.
Since there's no building, we had set up temporary tents on the place planned to become the athletic ground of the school, and added temporary sheets as beds by bundling hay bought from the farms. I don't know if Arisa's heartstring was touched by the hay beds, but she was frolic and slept together with the children on the straw beds on the first day. The next morning, she requested some strange dishes that were goat milk, and bread dipped in melted cheese. Since this is Arisa, she must be reproducing scenes from some anime or manga, no doubt about it.

I don't know where they come from but in just several days, more than 100 children have come to live in the orphanage. No one is complaining even

though the meals are simple besides the ones in the first day. Mysteriously enough, there aren't any child who's being picky or leaves leftovers.

I was going to employ our maids as the regular staffs of the orphanage, but as expected, they wouldn't be enough with this many children.
By Ms. Miteruna's suggestion, I decided to employ the wives around the neighborhood as part-timers to make up for the shortage. They are women with ages ranging from 20 to 50 years old. I also have them participate in the food distribution for the poor.

Lulu investigated the reason why so many children had gathered here by using the employees' network. Since the information charge was only ant honey cookies, it was cheap. As expected of Lulu.

Now then, the reason is simple. They are children that have overflowed from other orphanages.

Originally, there were three privately and government managed orphanages in the labyrinth city. However, since this was a city with a lot of casualties, there were also a lot of orphans, so every orphanage was over capacity. The two government managed orphanages were still fine, but the privately managed one couldn't even give enough food, let alone beds.

Since the state was as such, my late-start orphanage was wholeheartedly approved. I feel that they've pushed problem children and ones who have bad physical growth on us, but it's not a problem. The mischievous kids were THUMP-ed by Arisa and Tama from the start, they're helping the adult managers now.

It seems that, up until now the overflowed children had been picked by criminal guilds of the slums, they were on the tragic course of being sold to the slave trader. And so, Kuro eliminates those kind of slum criminal guild with a villain group in the core. I left some relatively less objectionable people since other new villains from other cities would just come if I thoroughly rooted them.

As an extra, I've also finished some miscellaneous matters during this time. I brought the lost thieves that I had left in the labyrinth prison to the authorities, and delivered the corpses of the explorers that had been turned

into stones I had collected from the Cockatrice area to their bereaved families through the explorer guild.
I wasn't present since I didn't want to see the tragic scene, but the guildmaster thanked me. As for the rewards, after receiving them, I gave it to the church and another orphanage of the labyrinth city as Satou.

◇

"Newspaper extra?"
"Yes, I bought them since they were being sold in front of the west guild."
"What what?"

I read the newspaper extra from Ms. Miteruna whom I had asked to go to the west guild for some business. On the Pera paper written with ink is--

"Kuh, my floormaster's been huntedddddd"

--the news about the [Lion's Roar] party leads by a magic swordsman called crimson noble from before which has defeated the floormaster of the middle layer.

Arisa, I know you're vexed, but please stop grasping and shaking my shoulder.

"Arisa~?"
"What's wrong nodesu?"

Pochi who was playing outside seemed to have heard Arisa's scream, she came back inside through the window. Let's not say boorish thing like this is the second floor. That's why, Tama, please stop coming back home from the ceiling. Lulu will get mad at you for getting the floor full of dust you know?

"U, the shortest record of getting Mithrillll"
"Disappointing."
"Regrettable."

Not only Arisa, even Mia and Liza look disappointed.
Do they really want the Mithril Plate that much?

"Of course we are. I mean, that's [A Promise] and all. I want to TUEEE~"
<TUEEE: 'Look at how strong I am!", or something along that line.>
"To leave the record of master's achievement, it is something to be proud of even as a slave."

Putting aside Arisa, I understand how Liza feels.
U~n, I don't want to stand out though. Well, I guess it's fine. Everyone has gotten strong anyway, they probably can deal with anyone who bares their fangs at them. Having the upper nobles of the royal capital as enemies will be troublesome, but I can just enlist the kingdom's top people's help with Nanashi. Un, looks like it's manageable somehow.
I might be too soft, but Mithril Plate holder isn't an existence as special as Saga Empire's hero or Nanashi.

"Then, let's aim for it."
"Eh? Is it alright?"
"Is it fine with you master?"
"Fighting a powerful enemy once will be a good experience too."

I nod to Arisa who has caught both my arms and looks at me from below.
Lured by Arisa who jumps up reaching the ceiling, Pochi and Tama also jump up together.

"Yay!"
"Gaishu isshoku~"
<Outer monochrome>
"Kenkoichitekina nodesu!"
<Health drop>

I guess they mean 'with a single blow' and 'stake it all'? Tama is fine, but in Pochi's case it'd become sink or swim match, is that alright?
<TLN: They're pronounced the same, but written differently.>
Pochi and Tama are too excited, they climb from both my sides, so I put them on my shoulders and support them with hands.

Now then, the problem is where the floor master is.

There wasn't any floormaster-like monster in the middle layer when I checked it three days ago. There might be some kind of procedure to make the floormaster appears.

First, I should ask someone in the knows.

◇

"What's this, are you blinded by money and fame too?"

The one who replies at me asking for the condition to POP the floor master in disgust is the pyromaniac guildmaster.

"I have enough of both. My retainers want to fight against a powerful enemy."
"Geez, you guys are the seventh party you know."

I guess it's as expected of explorers.

The information I got from the guildmaster was not much.

You can make the floormaster appear by either waiting 10 years since it's last defeated, or summoning it by placing a magic core from a level 50 or higher monster on the altar and read aloud the [Summoning Passage].

"The upper layer one has been defeated by the [Witch of Heaven Ascension] Princess Ringrande 8 years ago. The next one will appear in two years. The magic core of level 50 or higher monster is something that's quite valuable itself. There's hardly anyone who will use it as a bait to have a fight with the [Floor Master] which you don't know whether you could win."

If lady Ringrande defeated the floormaster 8 years ago, that means she was only 14 years old back then, amazing. To accomplish such great deed without cheat. I thought that she was just a violent siscon woman, but let's revise the impression toward her.

I have around 20 magic cores of level 50 or higher monsters, so there's no

problem even if I use one or two. I thought of having multiple battles with many, but it seems that you can't summon the floormaster again for one year once you summon it. I was thinking of using the defeated floormaster's magic core to summon another and fighting multiple of them, but looks like I was too naive.
It seems that a floormaster that isn't defeated will reign for one year and then go back by itself. During the floor master reign, monsters are strengthened and stimulated, which in turn increase explorers' mortality rate, so in case of failure, the holy knight of the royal capital will come to subjugate the floormaster.

"Not the labyrinth army, but the holy knights?"
"Yeah, the labyrinth army is a force that acts to purely prevent monsters overrun the surface. They can't be let to carelessly fight with the [Floor Master], exhausting them."

Is it alright to exhaust the holy knights?

◇

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for participating in our triumphal return today!"

A handsome man and seven high level explorers are standing triumphantly on the platform that's been prepared in front of the west guild. I ignored it since there wasn't anyone on the platform when I arrived at the guild, but it seems the core members of explorers who have defeated the floormaster are giving speech there.

"Now then, after the minstrels tell the story about our gallant figures in the fight, it's the long-awaited time to show the spoils that have victoriously gained from the [Floor Master]."

The labyrinth city people who have gathered in the plaza and been treated to free food and drink by the explorers in the leading role cheers in delight.

The handsome man took out a sword.

"This is the flame sword, the [Fang of Flame Snake]."

When the handsome man fills it with magic power, flame appears on the red blade, people raise frenzied cheers that are mixed with angry words. That looks like it'll give you burn if you use it long. I guess you can use it together with fireproof gloves.

In addition, they show various magic items they've acquired like a halberd that can emit fire. When a platinum tiara with egg-sized ruby was displayed, high-pitched shrieks came from the women in nobility seats, and angry voice reverberated from the bearded old man merchants when they showed Orihalcon ore and Damascus Iron ingot. I would have cheered together with them if it was half a month ago.

However, that's not it.
The item that has pulled my soul is not that.

There isn't anyone besides me who pay any attention to that item. No, only Arisa turned her face toward me and grinned at that moment.

That item's name is [Gift Orb].
There are three Gift Orbs.

First, Gift Orb [Light Magic].
Starting from the nobles, a lot of people raised their voices of envy.

Another is, Gift Orb [Posion Resistance].
It's enough to make some upper nobles to stand up from their nobility seats.

As for the last one, most people look puzzled.

『1. Really? Nothing to do with me
2. Give it to me, please!
>3. Kill and plunder』

Arisa shows some strange branching choices on her palm, made with light magic.

Well, I won't kill, but I'll use all of my available money, connections and skills to get it.

That is, Gift Orb [Chant].

It's a wonderful artifact that will present me the skill I desire most.

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Credits

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